SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

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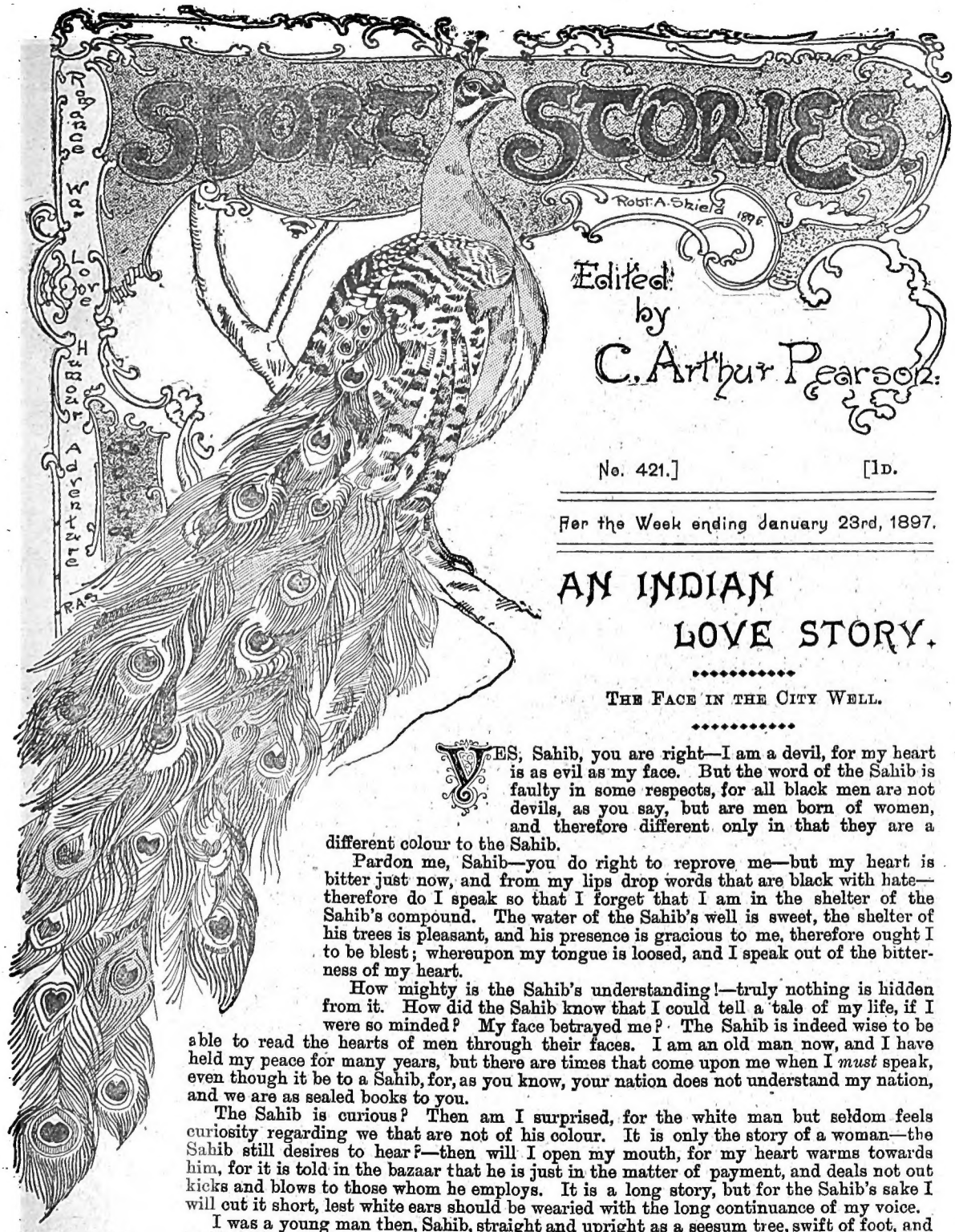
STORIES
Robt. A. Shield 1896
Edited by
C. Arthur Pearson.
No. 421.] [1d.
For the Week ending January 23rd, 1897.
AN INDIAN LOVE STORY.
THE FACE IN THE CITY WELL.
YES, Sahib, you are right—I am a devil, for my heart is as evil as my face. But the word of the Sahib is faulty in some respects, for all black men are not devils, as you say, but are men born of women, and therefore different only in that they are a different colour to the Sahib.
Pardon me, Sahib—you do right to reprove me—but my heart is bitter just now, and from my lips drop words that are black with hate—therefore do I speak so that I forget that I am in the shelter of the Sahib's compound. The water of the Sahib's well is sweet, the shelter of his trees is pleasant, and his presence is gracious to me, therefore ought I to be blest; whereupon my tongue is loosed, and I speak out of the bitterness of my heart.
How mighty is the Sahib's understanding!—truly nothing is hidden from it. How did the Sahib know that I could tell a tale of my life, if I were so minded? My face betrayed me? The Sahib is indeed wise to be able to read the hearts of men through their faces. I am an old man now, and I have held my peace for many years, but there are times that come upon me when I *must* speak, even though it be to a Sahib, for, as you know, your nation does not understand my nation, and we are as sealed books to you.
The Sahib is curious? Then am I surprised, for the white man but seldom feels curiosity regarding we that are not of his colour. It is only the story of a woman—the Sahib still desires to hear?—then will I open my mouth, for my heart warms towards him, for it is told in the bazaar that he is just in the matter of payment, and deals not out kicks and blows to those whom he employs. It is a long story, but for the Sahib's sake I will cut it short, lest white ears should be wearied with the long continuance of my voice.
I was a young man then, Sahib, straight and upright as a seesum tree, swift of foot, and handsome as the leopard that crouches among the rocks; strong also was I, so that the wrestlers in the city dreaded my approach. The Sahib looks in my evil face and wonders if what I say is true, but before God my word may be believed, as the Sahib will discover if he questions the old men of the city. Truly my face is ugly now so that no woman may desire me, but it was not always so. The Sahib grows weary—I will begin.
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It is strange to speak of this matter, therefore does my tongue travel a crooked road and take a long time to arrive at the beginning!

It was the third day after the feast of the Mohurrum —the Sahib was not in the country then or he would know that never has there been such riots as during that time. It was shortly after the Mutiny, and the hearts of men were in a state of turbulence and unrest, therefore they fought until the troops were sent among them and blood was spilled like water, so that the terror of the English was driven deep down into the hearts of all who saw and took part.

But three days had passed since the riots had been crushed, and the city was lying quiet as a whipped cur that had not yet recovered from its wounds. And as I sat by the well that stands in the the centre market place, and thought on these things, a woman came to draw water. She was a respectable woman, Sahib, for her face was covered up from the sight of men, her eyes only being visible; and I watched her as one might watch any other living thing that came that way. And as I sat thus, I noted that the wheel upon which the rope of the bucket runs was stiff, wherefore I arose and set it right.

And as I glanced idly down into the water of the well, the woman's cloth fell aside so that I saw the reflection of her face—then the next moment she had covered it up and the reflection had vanished. And in that instant, Sahib, my heart had grown hot with love, for the face of the woman was exceeding beautiful, as beautiful as that of a houri from Paradise ; such was the beauty of her face that it might dwell for ever in the hearts of such men as saw it!

Yes, the Sahib is right—English women are also beautiful, but that is, so long as they are tall and fat; but the white Mem Sahibs only touch our eyes, whereas the native women touch our hearts.

And as I sat and dreamt, the woman passed away down the road that leads to the nether part of the city, and no man knew that I had seen her face. And at once a great longing seized me to know who she was and whence she came, wherefore I sought out Dudder Bux, the letter-writer, for he knows the whole business of the city, and is also willing to talk upon it should a man approach him rightly.

And when I had sat and drank* tobacco and talked upon many things that were far from my heart, I said: "Saw you the woman who came and drew water while I sat by the side of the well?"

And Dudder Bux smoked his hookah for a while, and then replied:

"I did."

Now my heart was burning with impatience, wherefore I said:

"Tell me, O Dudder Bux, who the woman is, and where she lives."

Then Dudder Bux laughed long and loud.

"Ho, ho!" he cried, "where the flowers are there the bees come. Thou art going the way of the multitude, for the fame of her beauty has spread; but she is not for you, she is about to be betrothed to the Keeper of the Thana. Even were she free her father would not give her to you, for he is a hard man, and grasping withal."

But I still craved to know her name, so that at last I prevailed upon Dudder Bux to tell me.

Then cried I:

"Take your pen, O Dudder Bux, and write this letter for me to the woman, for my heart is hot with love."

But the letter-writer would not, for he said it was an evil thing, and that through her father would the Judgment of God be visited on his head.

It was hard work, Sahib, but at last I prevailed upon him by the offer of much money, so that he wrote this letter:

"Thou art as a houri from Paradise, and in the light of thine eyes lieth man's knowledge and happiness.

"Thy lips are the gates of love, thy mouth is a ruby temple, thy teeth are the pillars thereof; but thy voice is like gems dropped from the Throne of God.

"Thy hair is a mesh within which to catch and hold men's hearts captive. My heart waiteth for thee; thou art my life and my love!

"My heart is hot with love; it melteth before the light of thine eyes and the magic of thy lips. Open thou therefore thy heart to me that I may enter and dwell therein."

Thus did he write, Sahib, under my guidance; then folded I the letter and gave it into the hand of one who might be trusted, with instructions that he was to deliver it into the hand of the maiden when she was alone and there were no other eyes to see.

And after many days had passed, I received an answer by the hand of Dudder Bux, wherefore I knew that the messenger I had sent was to be trusted. And the maiden wrote little, for she was shy, so that the pen trembled in her fingers; but she said that what I wrote was evil, for it was not the custom to write unto young women such letters as the one I had sent. But she knew not the uprightness of my heart towards her, Sahib, or she would not have written this thing.

And that night, Sahib, I went out and stood in the shadow of the babool tree that is on that side of the road facing her father's house, and there I played on the zither and sang songs such as the men of this country sing to the women they love. And after a while her father came forth and looked round, but seeing no one he went within again. But the woman I saw not, for she was in the courtyard sitting with her mother and the other women of the household.

And the next morning early I went and knocked against the door-posts of her father's house, so that the door was opened to me. And I, having called her father out, spake upon the matter that was nearest my heart, and besought him to give me his daughter in marriage.

Then he laughed scornfully, and looked upon me with an evil smile. "Ho, ho!" he cried; "so *your* heart also is inclined that way! The story of my daughter's beauty has gone abroad, so that I might, if I were so minded, build the foundations of my house upon the young men who stand as suitors in the shadow of it."

Now this was a crooked saying, and as I pondered upon it, the man stooped down and digged a hole in the earth—so large, Sahib. And he, having done this thing, rose, and said unto me: "Can you fill this hole that I have digged with rupees? If so be that you can, my daughter is yours; for I am, as all the bazaar says, a hard man and fond of money."

Then was I sad, for my substance did not run to so much. But I cried:

"Tarry yet awhile, and I will earn the money quickly, and then come for your daughter."

And he answered:

"I will tarry."

* *Smoked* tobacco. This is a literal translation of a Hindustani idiom.

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Then waited I the whole of that day, and when the sun had set, the woman came forth, and looked upon the rising moon. And I drew near, and revealed myself to her carefully, for it was not in my mind to frighten the maiden, and drive her from me.

And she looked upon me with the startled eyes of the fawn, for her heart was shy as the hearts of young maidens are when they know not the power of love.

"Was it you," she cried, "who wrote to me by the hand of Dudder Bux, the letter-writer?"

"It was indeed I," I made reply.

Then for many moments we stood silent. And at last I minded me that the time was short, and that I had much to say before I left her. Then drew I near, my lips burning like live coals with the love that was in my heart.

"Heart's delight!" I cried, "the time is short, and I have much to say unto thee."

And at my presumptuous speech the woman turned and would have left me, but that I held her back.

"Nay, nay," said I; "be not afraid; for I would not harm thee if I could."

Then held I her tiny left hand, Sahib, and as I gazed upon her rosy-tipped finger-nails that were like unto the morning sun upon the clouds, my tongue broke its bonds, and I spoke words of passion and love to the maiden, until I felt that she trembled with the echo of the storm that was within me. And as I looked down through her eyes into her heart I saw the first dawn of love, and felt that already the victory was half mine.

Then cried I: "Heart's Heart, uncover to me that I may once more look upon thy beautiful face."

And she turned away her head and said: "Nay, this is an evil thing that you say to me. Would you have me be as the English Mem Sahibs who flaunt about in the light of day with uncovered faces that all men may look upon them?"

Then answered I with passion and love trembling upon my lips: "I ask this thing, Heart's Delight, because my heart is burning with love for thee. I swear before God of the honourableness of my intention towards thee, wherefore I pray that thou wilt do this small thing."

And the woman was silent for a long time, but by the light of the moon I saw that she trembled at my presence. Wherefore I went softly, and parted the covering that hid her face, she forbidding me not, and, Sahib, I kissed her upon her beautiful lips as it is the privilege of an Englishman to kiss the woman he loves. Thus was our love ratified that night! Then did she return to her father's house, and as for me, I went back to dream of Mothi, and how I might win her.

Yes, Sahib, my tongue is so dry that it cleaveth to the roof of my mouth by reason of the long converse I have had. The Sahib is indeed gracious, but I cannot drink of the fire-water, for it is forbidden in the Koran.

The story draws to its close. There is not much more to tell. The next morning, Sahib, I left the city, and, having arrived at Fyzabad, I borrowed the character certificates of a man who was now too old to work, and took service with a Contractor Sahib who was at that time making much money under the Government, and became a bearer such as the one who sits without in the verandah. And the men of that city said I was a rogue, but, Sahib, in those days my whole thought was of Mothi, and how I might find the money that her father required for her.

And after much time had passed, I left the Contractor Sahib, and returned to the city of my people. But my heart trembled within me through some unknown fear, so that I sought out Dudder Bux, the letter-writer, and begged him to tell me all that had passed in the city since my departure. And when I had heard all, I rent my garments and tore my hair, for Mothi's father had taken her and given her in marriage to the Keeper of the Thana. And having drawn from Dudder Bux the place where she now lived, I repaired to that quarter of the city and took up my station outside the house.

And as I stood thus, there came to my ears the low sound of a woman crying, and the dull thud—thud of a stick upon living flesh; and my heart grew hot within me so that I leapt over the wall and stood inside the courtyard. My tongue now refuses to dwell upon what I saw there, Sahib, but at the time my brain swam and my heart grew fierce so that I leapt upon the man and wrestled with him until he fell. Then took I off my shoe for I would not defile my hands with striking him, and smote him many times on the face with it.

And the man lay very still and moved not. And Heart's Delight watched it all with quiet, frightened eyes, and when all was over she came gently to me and I led her forth. And in the Market Place I hired a horse and together we left the city and rode night and day with fresh relays of horses, for we were riding with happiness and love as the prize.

And at last we reached a city far enough south of the Ganges, and there we tarried a week—and to this day, Sahib, my old heart throbs when I think of the divine happiness of those days spent with my Mothi!

And at the end of that time there came men who seized and bound me and took me before a magistrate, Sahib, for they said that the Keeper of the Thana was dead, and that my hand had slain him. And for many days I lay in prison, my heart rent with thoughts of Mothi's loneliness and unprotectedness; and at last they brought me forth, and the case was heard. And when I comprehended the sentence, Sahib, I cursed the day that I was born and behaved like a madman; but they paid no heed and only laughed in my face.

And for thirty long years I toiled in the prison yard, and in that place I was accounted as one who was mad. And when the sentence was accomplished, Sahib, I came forth, my body bowed and shrunken with age, and my hands rough as the elephant's hide, by reason of the many ropes I had twisted and the hempen mats my fingers had woven. Then did I seek Mothi with passion and love still hot in my heart, but none knew aught of her, and her name had passed away like a shadow passes away at noonday.

But at last I found an old man who remembered the woman, and from his lips I learnt that Heart's Delight had died in that city of want and privation—with none to care for her. And the light of her beautiful eyes was for ever quenched, and her lips for ever silent! Ah, Sahib, I am old in body, but hearts take long to die.

Nay, the Sahib does not understand the people of my nation, or he would not offer money—let the Sahib throw it to the passing beggars, for my spirit is still proud, and silver cannot heal broken hearts.

The Sahib is my friend; he does well to reprove me; but he is a young man and does not yet know what it is to love. . . . . I was mad to talk upon this matter; let us drink tobacco together, and I beg that the Sahib will forget that I have opened my lips and laid bare my heart.

FRANCIS GLOVER.

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A MESMERIC FEAT.

BIBLIOTECA BOLIVIANA

THEY were talking about mesmerism in the green room of the theatre. Terrell, the manager, was there, and did not believe in it at all.

"Mesmerism is simply another word for trickery," he said confidently.

"Pardon me, but have you ever witnessed any mesmeric phenomena?" asked the man with the dark, penetrating eyes. He was a newspaper man, a friend of one or two of the chief actors, and haunted the green-room. Terrell had seen him there before, and did not take kindly to him—perhaps because Fred Upham, the newspaper man, had bothered him to accept a play of his. However, a theatrical manager cannot afford altogether to offend the Press, so Upham was not interfered with.

Terrell answered him rather curtly, however.

"Thousands of times," he said, "what they call phenomena; men eating candles, and all that sort of nonsense; but it is all trickery."

"Mind, Mr. Upham is a mesmerist himself," put in the leading lady.

The manager shrugged his shoulders.

"Would you like to see an exhibition of what I can do?" asked the journalist quietly.

Terrell shrugged his shoulders again.

"Would you care to wager that I can't stop your play to-night by mesmerising the company?" went on Upham, as quietly as before; and they all laughed, Terrell among the rest.

"I am quite serious," said the journalist, "and if Mr. Terrell does not object to my making the experiment—as he can hardly do after his assertions—I shall be happy to show him how easy it is to rule the wills of subjects whom I have been allowed to bring a little under my mesmeric control."

"What would you do to us?" asked the leading lady.

"Simply make a few passes before you went on. I should not, of course, send you into the mesmeric sleep, or you could not go on at all, unless I willed you and directed your actions!"

She turned to Terrell.

"Oh! do let him! There's a dear."

The manager frowned.

"I can't have my plays humbugged about even for your sake."

"But, according to you, I cannot do anything," said Upham. "If there is nothing in mesmerism I cannot affect your play at all. Will you agree to a wager?"

"Come, Mr. Terrell," said everybody, "you cannot refuse to back your assertions."

"It is too absurd," said the manager.

"But there is no harm in having a little money on it," said Edmund French, the comedian. "Mr. Upham is welcome to make as many mesmeric passes on me as he pleases, if the experiment is made on the monologue, but I don't think he will be able to prevent me going through my piece."

Edmund French was acting a monologue, called: *The Lost Will*, as the first piece every night before the drama. *The Lost Will* had been written by a well-known dramatist—Terrell never under any circumstances risked a play not written by a well-known man—and it was not much of a success.

Edmund French made as much of it, of course, as anybody possibly could: but it did not go very well for all that.

Perhaps this is why the manager allowed himself to be cajoled and bullied at last into wagering one hundred pounds that Upham could not, while sitting in a box on the following night, prevent Edmund French from performing the piece, or make him act in any unusual manner during the performance of it.

The wager was put into writing, and both Terrell and Upham deposited their hundred pounds with one of the company.

Terrell called upon Edmund French to give his promise that he would not play any tricks, but French shook his head.

"No, Mr. Terrell, I know perfectly well that if I did, I should leave your company on Saturday night. And I can't afford to do that, even if Upham offered me all his £100 as an inducement."

Terrell laughed.

"How well you know me," he said.

* * * * *

Next night every member of the company who had not to be dressing for the drama was in the front of the house, anxious to watch Fred Upham's experiment.

The journalist had made a few impressive passes over Edmund French after he had dressed, and then

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went with the manager into a private box before the curtain went up.

"Does French play nothing but light comedy?" he asked carelessly, when they were seated.

Terrell laughed his rather unpleasant laugh.

"He does not get the chance. They all think they are taking the wrong parts. French thinks he has the making of a serious actor. Comic men invariably have; but it is lucky for the public that we managers keep them to the parts that they can really do."

"I think I'll make French play a serious part to-night," said the journalist thoughtfully; and as he spoke the curtain went up.

Everybody who had heard of the experiment to be made, glanced at Upham, who, as the curtain rose, fixed his dark penetrating eyes with a concentrated look of command on the face of the actor.

Half-way across the stage French seemed suddenly to feel the effect of his commanding glance. He had come in as usual with the little skip of a comic old man, but now he suddenly stopped dead. The members of the company ceased to look at Upham, and fixed their eyes of anticipation on Edmund French. His panic was only for a moment—the ordinary spectators could hardly notice it—then he walked to the seat that he had to take by a small table, but he staggered as he walked with uncertain steps, and when he reached his place, sank down with his arm on the table, and his face on his arm.

"Why, the man is drunk!" said Terrell.

And when French spoke his voice sounded as though the manager was right. Most of all, he was not speaking his lines, but something quite different. The audience, however, noticed nothing wrong, for the words were coherent and intelligible, although they certainly were not the words of *The Lost Will*.

His apparent drunkenness seemed part of the play. The words were even interesting, and there was a listening hush over the place, which was not usually noticed when *The Lost Will* was played.

"It is a trick," said Terrell, but Upham, with his dark eyes fixed on the actor's face, did not seem to hear.

His cheeks were unnaturally pale, and drops of cold perspiration stood on his forehead.

"French shall suffer for this," growled the manager again, and Upham, with his white, concentrated face, turned to him with sudden excitement.

"Be silent, man, unless you want a fiasco. Leave me alone, and I will pull you through. Distract my attention, and see what happens."

The manager glanced at the stage again in obedience to the journalist's directing finger.

The actor was sitting quite motionless, with a vacant look on his face. Terrell was conscious now that he had stopped speaking in the middle of a speech at the instant that the mesmerist had turned his eyes from the stage.

"For Heaven's sake, go on," he said, conquered. As Upham turned back the play went on again, the astonished manager not speaking another word during the whole performance.

The piece that French was giving Terrell had never heard before; it seemed to him to take hours delivering. In reality, the monologue was quite a short one, and occupied less than half-an-hour, but to the anxious manager expecting every moment that something might disturb the mesmerist's attention, and cause the piece to break down ingloriously, the minutes passed like hours. Even in his agony of suspense the manager could not help noticing Edmund French's acting. It was the most wonderful part of the whole affair. He was completely transformed, and played with a depth and passion that astonished those who knew his ordinary acting in comic character, clever as that was. He had always been able to make the audience laugh. To-night, in this strange little monologue, he was making half the audience cry. When, all too soon for everybody but Terrell, the curtain came down, there was a perfect hurricane of applause, and the actor was called again and again.

Next day there was an enthusiastic notice in one of the principal morning papers, whose critic had been lured there in time for the monologue by a note from the leading lady. He could not say enough of the play or of the acting. "Without any notice on the programme and without even changing the scenery of *The Lost Will*," he wrote, "there was produced last night at the theatre a short play which was as remarkable for its quite abnormal cleverness and beauty, as for the modesty of its anonymous author, who allowed it to appear without even a title." The critic went on enthusiastically to describe the beauties of the monologue, and then gave a quarter of a column to Edmund French's acting.

In the afternoon Upham received a visit at his rooms from Terrell and the actor who held the stakes.

The latter handed over the two hundred pounds, and Terrell asked if it were possible to get a copy of the monologue, which French had delivered under the journalist's influence.

"It was a splendid thing," said the manager. "Where on earth did you get it from? I suppose you must have known it yourself word for word?"

"Yes," said Upham quietly, "it was a little thing I offered you six months ago, which you said would not do at all."

"Well, I hope you will offer it to me again," said Terrell. "The public will expect it now. I only hope French will act as well when he is not under your influence."

"Oh, I expect he will," said the mesmerist, with a smile; but it was not until almost a year after, when his plays were asked for everywhere, and French had married the leading lady and joined another company, that Upham handed him back his one hundred pounds and explained how anxiously he and his "chum," Edmund French, had been to get a hearing, the one for his plays, the other for his serious acting.

"But that pause when you took your eyes away?" stammered Terrell.

"Oh! the pause was in the play," laughed Upham.

W. J. MORGAN.

RESULT OF
POST-CARD COMPETITION No. 1.
(NEW SERIES.)

TWO GUINEAS have been forwarded to Mr. ROBERT CUNNINGHAM, 52, Dean Street, Glasgow, whose anagram ran as follows: "Ye yarn a heap, *P.W.*"

Result of Coupon Collecting Competition.

Full names and addresses of winners in this Competition will be found in *Pearson's Weekly* dated January 23rd.

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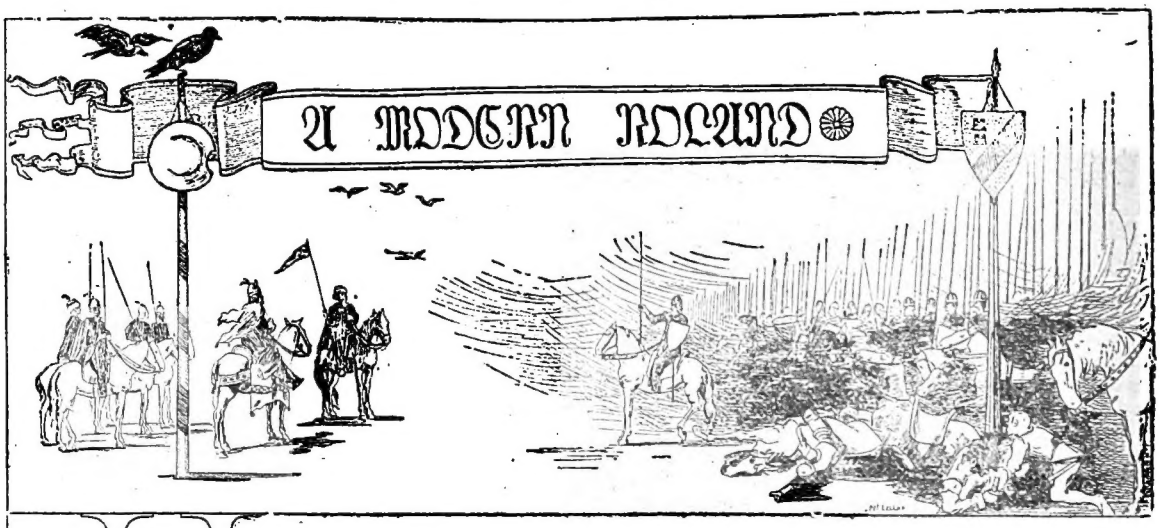

HIS name was Roland, which was very fine, as everyone will admit. It was also Perkins, which was not so fine; he admitted that himself. He was, in fact, so keenly conscious of the disproportion between the two names that he came at last to be known as plain Perkins. This was, no doubt, partly because of his own persistent avoidance of his christian name—"Yours truly, R. Perkins," he always signed—and partly because of the ferocity with which he was accustomed to resent the familiar appellation "Roley," which an injudicious wag had on one occasion, and only on one, ventured to couple with "poly." It was after this that he dropped the Roland from his signature and adopted the one given above.

Mr. Perkins had been left an orphan at the early age of seven and had passed the age of wisdom, as defined by the law, before he learnt aught of the history of his celebrated namesake, which will be the more readily understood when it is stated that Mr. Perkins had been indebted for his early education to the Parish, by which estimable institution he had been, when twelve years old, bound apprentice to a hairdresser.

As Mr. Jackworthy's business improved, so also did the position of his young apprentice, till, at twenty-two, behold our Roland the prop of Mr. Jackworthy's declining years and practical manager of his very lucrative concern.

So far Mr. Perkins had been happy. His life, if not flooded with continuous sunshine, had, at least, not been darkened overmuch by clouds of trouble. It annoyed him, certainly, to be obliged to resent any trifling with his christian name; but this was only occasional, for at the time of this history few people knew the significance of the letter R, and fewer still would have cared to inquire.

Mr. Perkins always breakfasted early with a good appetite, saw that everything was in apple-pie order, appeared fresh, rosy and smiling before, or rather behind, each successive customer, and conversed with astonishing fluency and apparently tireless iteration on the state of the weather, past, present, and to come. Were a customer indiscreet enough to indulge in a conversational bolt, Mr. Perkins would gently lead him back to his favourite topic with a persuasive insistance before which the most aggressive were wont to yield. Once, indeed, the flow of his speech had been checked, when a certain farmer, broad of chest and rubicund of visage, had, at the first allusion to the weather, so heartily objected to the same, that Mr. Perkins, catching sight of the scowling face in the mirror, judged silence to be the safest, if not the best reproof, and presently bowed out the offender with a dignity worthy of his noble name.

Up to the age of three-and-twenty, then, Roland had been happy. Then there befell the one great event of his life—he fell in love. Not with saucy Miss Jackworthy, whose bold black eyes flashed many a bid for admiration at the customers as they passed through the shop, or lounged over the counter, paying for a smile the price of half-a-dozen bottles of Jackworthy's Marvellous Trichopoietic Fluid, done up neatly in pink wrappers with a yellow slip inside, whereon was set forth in six different languages the virtues of the persuasive compound, together with a couple of illustrations, showing how a bald-headed young man, after using three bottles, became the proud possessor of a head of hair which a Papuan might be excused for envying.

Not with the fair face of Arabella Morl, whose father was in the drapery line round the corner, and who three times at least every year announced in his plate glass window "Great Sale of Remnant Stock! Must be Cleared at any Sacrifice! Bargains! Bargains!"

Not with Miss Leonora de Vancy, on whose charms, ample enough, and displayed in anything but a niggard fashion, Mr. Perkins was accustomed to gaze without a touch of emotion in the music hall where, after the shop was shut, and he was free to come and go as he liked, he was occasionally wont to forget the labours of the day.

No, not to any of these did the great heart of Roland yield, but to—I must out with it—to the Lady Maud Ellanton, the daughter of his Grace the Duke of Marlshire! Yes, there it is in plain English, and you may smile at it, laugh at it if you will; but it is true.

It was soon over, this first and last passion of Roland Perkins, and it came about in this wise. One night a

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belated customer, hurrying from the saloon, left behind him an old book, which Mr. Perkins, noticing, carried to his room for safety. After supper he dipped into its pages, where, among a number of quaint tales, he read with deep attention of the story of his namesake, the type of knightly chivalry, Charlemagne's great paladin, Roland. A fanciful account, no doubt, but one which absorbed the reader, and gave to the name he bore and had learnt to detest a new interest and fascination.

"I must learn more about this chap," said the little hairdresser to himself, and accordingly, one day—a holiday—he refused the offer of a drive with Miss Morl and her brother, and found his way instead to the British Museum.

Arrived there, the astonished attendant found for him the literature which Mr. Perkins in his ignorance could but lamely ask for, and far into the afternoon he read the legends of the great king. True, many of his first illusions were dispelled by the hard facts of history, but these he put aside, and clung to the romance which the sweet singers of old time had woven round his hero—his very own, his namesake.

As he walked homewards in the gathering darkness, Roland's step was light and springy, his head was held high, his eyes shone, and his whole being was aglow with a new and entirely pleasureable excitement.

In that one afternoon the young man's horizon had widened immensely, the great book of the glorious past had been opened for him, and as he turned its glowing pages his heart grew hot within him to think that this magnificent heritage was his, his own imperishable possession.

Life held now a deeper and a sweeter meaning; he was no hero, it might never be his to play a hero's part, but he bore a hero's name, and that, he vowed, should be rescued from the limbo to which he had ignorantly consigned it, and set like a jewel in his cap, plain for all folk to see.

As Roland drew near Mr. Jackworthy's house, which adjoined the shop, he saw that estimable man standing at the door, gazing anxiously up and down the street, and as he perceived his assistant approaching he uttered an exclamation of satisfaction.

"Ah, Perkins," said he, "I'm glad you've come home early, for there's an important job on hand. As soon as you have had your supper you must go to the Duke of Marlshire's house to dress Lady Maud's hair for a costume ball. Mr. Poulter"—the second assistant—"usually goes there, but as there's no knowing when he'll be back, and the message says to be sure and send in good time, you'll have to go yourself."

"Very good, sir," answered Mr. Perkins; and, his supper finished, he set out, somewhat excited at being thus suddenly introduced into the mansions of the great—a privilege hitherto monopolised by Mr. Poulter—yet at the same time confident in his skill as an artist, and rejoicing at the opportunity to display it. Had he known; could he have foreseen, perhaps—but he did not know, he could not foresee, and so he went.

Arrived at the great house, Mr. Perkins was shown into a room, where he waited patiently for the appearance of the lady. The day had been a fatiguing one for Roland, unaccustomed to pore over musty tomes, and his brain was already tired with the weight of its newly-acquired store of knowledge, which coursed through it in a strange, fantastic jumble of fact and fancy. How long he waited he never knew, but presently, as he sat in a chair before the cheval glass, Mr. Perkins' head drooped forward on his chest, the curling tongs slipped from his hand to the floor, and he dropped heavily asleep.

He awoke with a start. To his dazed eyes, only half opened, the mirror and his own sordid reflection therein were invisible, and he looked, or thought he looked upon an apparition from another world, so exquisitely beautiful in his opinion was the face at which he gazed, so lustrous, so angelic were the soft, kind eyes which looked into his own.

In one moment, however, the dream faded and reality took its place, and with many stammering apologies the sleeper rose to his feet. But that moment had done its fatal work, and Roland Perkins, lifted in spirit by his afternoon researches into a sphere infinitely removed from that of his commonplace, every-day existence, fell bound, metaphorically, hand and foot before the charms of the Lady Maud. Fell into love so passionate, so wild, so hopeless, that only the sublime pathos of it saved it from being supremely ridiculous.

Down sat Lady Maud, all unconscious of the havoc she had wrought, graciously supposing, and even condescending to inquire if the hairdresser had had a hard day's work. But Roland was mute, and with his

His eyes . . . bent upon the fair head before him.

eyes resolutely turned from the mirror, and bent upon the fair head before him, he went deftly and swiftly on with his task.

Only at last, when it neared completion, he raised his head, and forced himself to look. In an instant his brain swam, and his senses took temporary leave of him. He was intoxicated, mad, and from his dry lips escaped

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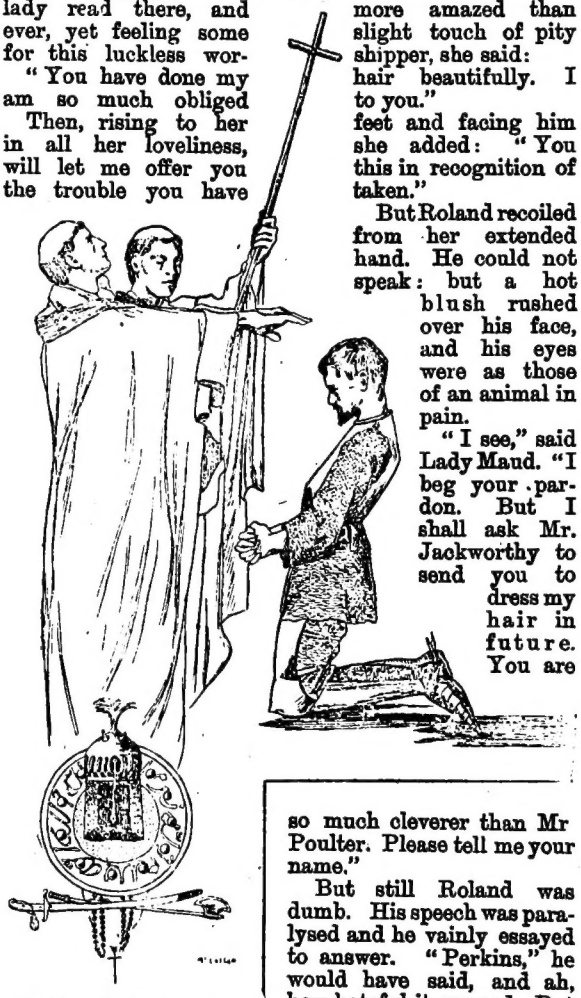
an inarticulate sound, so curious in its intonation, that Lady Maud glanced swiftly at his face in the glass, there to encounter a look so wild, so agonised, and withal so terrified at its own temerity, that she stared back aghast, only to drop her eyes a moment later and smile complacently at this visible effect of her marvellous beauty.

Presently she looked again, and still Roland, forgetful of everything else, gazed at her face in the mirror. But now his expression was changed. Dumb misery, hopeless longing, patient submission to the inevitable the lady read there, and more amazed than ever, yet feeling some slight touch of pity for this luckless wor- shipper, she said: "You have done my hair beautifully. I am so much obliged to you." Then, rising to her feet and facing him in all her loveliness, she added: "You will let me offer you this in recognition of the trouble you have taken."



Bending before the priestly benediction.

But Roland recoiled from her extended hand. He could not speak: but a hot blush rushed over his face, and his eyes were as those of an animal in pain.

"I see," said Lady Maud. "I beg your pardon. But I shall ask Mr. Jackworthy to send you to dress my hair in future. You are so much cleverer than Mr Poulter. Please tell me your name."

But still Roland was dumb. His speech was paralysed and he vainly essayed to answer. "Perkins," he would have said, and ah, how hateful it seemed. But not a word would come, suddenly his tongue was loosened, and unable to control himself, impelled by a force he could neither comprehend nor resist, he drew up his form, while from his astonished lips burst the words: "Roland de Ronrcesvalles!"

Not less astounded was Lady Maud. For one brief minute she stared at the sorry figure before her, and then, as she buried her face in her handkerchief, peal after peal of irrepressible laughter broke from her. When she raised her head again she was alone.

Out into the night sped Roland, shame on his brow and rage in his heart. Where he went he never cared, but his feet intuitively bore him to his home, where, throwing himself upon his bed, he tossed and turned all through the most miserable night he had ever known.

Too unlearned to be able to analyse his thoughts, too unused to deep emotions to divine his own disease, he only suffered, suffered as an animal under the torture of an undeserved lash. A sense of burning shame oppressed him that he should be as he was, mingled with a fierce longing to be he knew not what. And at last towards morning he fell asleep and dreamt. And who shall say whence came his dream?

Spread out upon a far extending plain glittered the spear head of a great army, awaiting the shock of battle. Anon it came. Arms clashed, and mailed forms were hurled bleeding and dying to the dust, while myriads of arrows, hurtling through the air, drank deep of the hearts' blood of knight and squire, with little care for high or low degree.

On the one side the fair faces of the Franks; on the other the dark-visaged Moslem host. Christian or Islam—which will gain the day? Now one side, now the other surges forward, only to reel back shattered before the impenetrable phalanx opposed to it. But slowly, surely the turbaned hosts press on.

The Christians waver—recoil—fly. No, not yet. Out from among them bursts with sudden fury a knight. Superbly mounted, in splendid armour, of firm stature and exalted mien, he spurs to the front, his drawn sword dripping with blood. It is enough! At mere sight of him the Christians gain new courage, and once again their faces are turned towards the foe. "A Roland! A Roland!" is the cry from a thousand throats, and backwards, ever backwards, the Moslem torrent is swept, wave rolling back on wave, the dying piled upon the dead, till over all the banner of the victors waves, and above that scene of hate and carnage rises supreme the peaceful cross of Christ.

And now once more the shout is borne upon the air, long and loud. "A Roland! A Roland!" and bending before the priestly benediction, the knight of Blaives bares his stately head, tossing to his squire his shattered casque and dented shield, and then, as he lifts his eyes to heaven, wonder of wonders, the dreamer beholds his own face! His own face glorified, transfigured, ennobled a thousand times, but still his own, and with a shout of mingled terror and triumph he awoke.

"Perkins," said Mr. Jackworthy, as they sat at breakfast, "you must have done uncommonly well last night, for there's a note come this morning asking me to send you back again to-night to dress Lady Maud's hair."

"It must be Mr. Poulter that's wanted," answered poor Roland, shivering slightly at the recollection of what he had endured.

"Not at all," said his master; "it's you. The note says to be very particular to send the same young man who was there yesterday. It's you, right enough."

"Very well, sir," replied Mr. Perkins; "I'll attend to the order." And pushing away his plate, he rose to begin the business of the day.

All through the long morning and afternoon he went about his work mechanically, but his thoughts were far away, and in spirit he fought once more that glorious fight, or rode in joust and tourney, while over all and watching all, holding for him the crown of victory, smiled the queen of beauty; and her face was the face of Lady Maud.

At length the weary day came to an end, and Roland set out once more for the Duke's mansion, and

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presently he stood again in her ladyship's room, his heart thumping against his side, and that dry feeling about his mouth and throat which he had experienced the night before. All in a moment Lady Maud stood before him, and then the memory of his shame overcame him, and he hung his head in agony.

Lady Maud, however, sat down without a word, and the hairdresser began his task. Only when it was completed and he turned to go, she rose and faced him.

"I was very rude to you last night, Mr——"

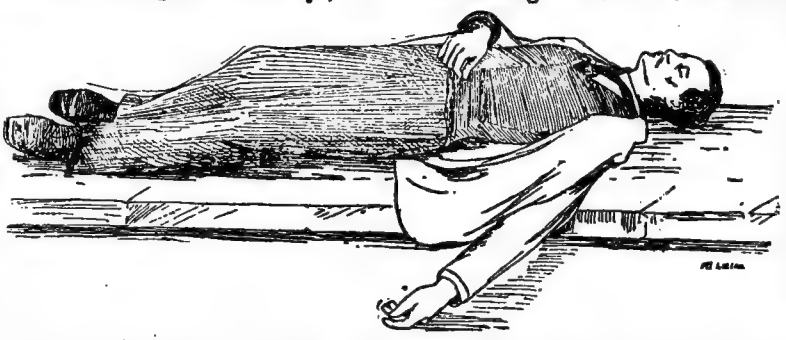
"Perkins," he interrupted hurriedly. "And don't name it, my lady. I made a fool of myself. I had been reading—and I was tired—I forgot—I—I——" he stammered, and hung his head again.

"And I hurt your feelings, Mr. Perkins," said Lady Maud. "Believe me, I did not mean to do so. Will you forgive me?"

Roland cast one swift glance at her lovely face, lit with a tender smile in which was no suggestion of derision, and then with a grace no one could have suspected in him, he sank upon his knee, and lifting the hem of her gown to his lips, pressed a passionate kiss upon it, and before she could recover from her surprise, had hurried from the house.

For a moment Lady Maud stood perfectly still. Then she smiled: then she laughed a light little laugh. "Poor fellow!" she said softly to herself, and descended to her carriage.

How it came about no one could exactly say, but coachman and footman were flung different ways, and lay stunned and bleeding on the road, while the splendid horses, mad with terror, dashed along, dragging behind them the carriage with its light burden, Lady Maud and her mother. The Duchess shrieked, but Lady Maud sat still, with white, set features and lips compressed, as, leaning forward a little, she waited for the end.



It came. Out from the throng of horrified onlookers on the pavement dashed a man, and hurled himself at the horses' heads. Kicking, plunging, rearing, they bore that clinging figure along with them in their wild career.

But the man's arms were strong, and the heart in him was big, and ere the willing hands that rushed to help could do aught, the horses were checked, and the danger was past. But, even in the very moment of victory the near horse lashed out his iron-shod hoofs.

There was a dull, sickening crash, and the brave rescuer fell headlong to the ground just as a couple of stalwart policemen grasped the reins, and forced the trembling horses to a standstill.

Then, while the Duchess lay moaning on the cushions, Lady Maud opened the carriage door and stepped out.

"Who stopped them?" she inquired, then she saw and recognised the prostrate figure, and rushed with a little cry to his side.

"He's done for, poor chap," said a bystander. But Lady Maud paid no heed to the words, as, kneeling there in the dusty street, she raised the head of her deliverer and pillowed it against her breast, her hot tears falling thick and fast upon him.

Slowly the eyes of the stricken man opened. His face was fat and square and commonplace, but a smile that transfigured it to the likeness of the knight of his dream played for one instant over it.

"My Lady!" was all he said, and in that supreme moment, leaving the transfiguring smile upon the dead lips, the spirit of Roland Perkins took its flight.

REGINALD HORSLEY.

Jumbled Story Competition.—28.

ON page 106 appears a story, each line of which is numbered. The lines are all in their wrong position, and the prizes mentioned below are offered to those who write on a sheet of paper the numbers of the lines in the order most nearly correct. The title is jumbled up, and should be correctly given *and pasted on the paper containing the effort.*

The conditions are jumbled in the following paragraph as an example. The correct order of the lines is given in line 10.

1 SHORT STORIES on or before *Monday,*
2 awarded to the readers whose solutions first
3 *JUMBLED STORY.*
4 Four Prizes—one of £5 and three of £1 each—are
5 *January 25th,* and envelopes must be marked
6 correct. In the event of a tie, the prizes will be
7 reach this office.
8 All attempts to be delivered at the offices of
9 offered to the readers whose keys are most nearly
10 4—9—6—2—7—8—1—5—3—12—11—13—10.
11 a sheet of paper the figures in the order they
12 Competitors in doing the story should write on
13 believe to be correct, thus:

£400 IN CASH PRIZES.

£100 is offered to the reader who collects the greatest number of coupons from ***Short Stories*** and ***Pearson's Weekly.***

Another £100 to the reader who collects from ***Home Notes.***

Another £100 to the newsagent who collects from ***Short Stories*** and ***Pearson's Weekly.***

Another £100 to the newsagent who collects from ***Home Notes.***

Readers must not collect newsagents' coupons, and they should lump ***Short Stories*** and ***P. W.*** coupons together. ***Home Notes*** coupons are to be collected separately.

ONE HUNDRED POUNDS FOR A WEEK'S WORK.

HUNDREDS OF CONSOLATION PRIZES WILL BE GIVEN.

No Coupons are to be sent to us until Jan. 1st, 1898.

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JUMBLED STORY No. 28.] [*See Page 105.*

HE THEN BIT GOTTODS.

Dorminster was driving his phaeton in the park, this he did not seem to mind—probably because men, as will be seen, are as obstinate as women.

He swung the greys round, and turned back.

"You brutes," he said, punishing them with the sweetest, girlish face in all the world.

For an instant this charming sight was flashed with his sister at his side. The greys were fresh things, you know, from a distance, and he fascinated an Indian, or a Zulu in war-paint, Society found him away. Dorminster pulled them in savagely.

At the time Dorminster was a pet of Society.

With a great cry I orminster sprang forward, remarking that he was going to shut himself in his confound——"

"Good gracious," said his sister, "I thought you darted through the canvas, the picture fell in two, that it was not wise to bolt away from pretty faces.

A clever artist, with hair artistically long, young, blue eyes, and a laughing mouth. Dorminster took him with a rush past Lady Orchadson's carriage. He half turned in his seat to try and put in driving performance with merry eyes, and the whip, "why can't you behave yourselves, when your brother falls in love with your greatest *distingué*, although perhaps not so interesting as she had never existed. And the greys learnt again the reins, "her daughter, her carriage, her footmen, on his brain; then the greys bolted again and drew his bow, and then—why, then his eyes fell on the girl alone behind the canvas, and a moment later she's gone."

The girl was leaning on the rails, watching his girl friend, and considers his case as hopeless.

So Dorminster and his sister—always "His girl for whom I would give my life, my art, everything that I possess, to have one glance from. You and her pug dog may be swallowed up in the frankest of laughs on her lips.

On the way back he was silent and moody, only his lips were near to hers, and she—well, she obeyed him interesting enough.

"Did you see the girl leaning on the railings, and clear away a pile of pictures and costumes, and to introduce you."

"Such a dear creature," said hostesses, "so very like you. How do I know that he really loves you? Dorminster came in. He threw his hat in a corner, and folding his arms, looked sadly at the picture, and the face was the face of the canvas brought to life. He set a piece of canvas on it, and began to draw.

"Whatever is the matter," cried his sister, "were I knew you."

The girl had disappeared as completely as though everyone but Lady Orchadson didn't want him to make space for a large easel that he drew forward.

"Lady Orchadson," said Dorminster, pulling at some new paints."

"Come," she cried, "quick, I want to show you the girl whom I love, the girl whom I worship, the sister," in spite of brains and beauty—were to be with would-be mothers-in-law.

In his studio, Dorminster began feverishly to have them at our next reception."

"Let's get away from this horrid crowd," said her friend, and did the best thing that she could downstairs to her visitor.

Lady Orchadson, for instance, arranged that he betrayed her. "Well, I will confess to you, dear. I have heard of her."

"And who may she be," inquired the visitor in laughing at us as we rushed past?" said Dorminster, "and go home."

Downstairs his sister was laughing over the events that morning, and absorbed his attention. They may see her for two minutes while I go out to buy the door.

She went to her brother's studio, and knocked at the picture. There! isn't it lovely? And exactly me immensely. But that was long ago, and before he comes back and looks at it, just put your knife and a girl's face looked timidly up at him—"I am dying to see him."

A girl's face appeared on the canvas; just a girl's charming, and his sister—so handsome, we *must* face, looking up to you, with a suggestion of merry studio, and was not to be disturbed. At which his sister knew that he had been saved at least from what is the best thing to do. Quick, he's coming!"

"I will write to her," said the sister, "and ask her of the morning. It is something to be amused at his art, to have one glance from you. Test him? you so very anxious to see the Orchadsons?"

She sent the letter by the first post, and two days worked on this with infinite care and skill, pausing later the fair unknown, that Dorminster had seen with your brother. I saw him at exhibitions and should meet her daughter on every occasion, and that at one time I fancied myself very much in love to come for a fortnight, and then—we shall see."

"How is the interesting brother," she asked. Well, I will tell you what he said. He said that he for one fatal moment, came to the house.

"Oh, impossible," cried the girl. Yet her blush met at all the best houses. He was overwhelmed down into her eyes. Then he bent his head, until he's fallen in love with. He won't see anyone."

He took his hat, and went out. His sister ran through, and slit it, down and across, and let him knife, and stand behind the picture—so—and when would give up everything that he possesses, even one mother-in-law.

"He's very busy painting a picture of a girl whom were in love in that quarter."

"I will fetch him down," said the other, "and see your genuine face behind it. Then you will see all innocence. "Oh, that Orchadson girl, I suppose. My dear girl, that's easy enough. Take this palate do—surrendered to him.

She darted from the room, leaving the trembling Dorminster. "I am in love with her. And now marry the girl. For in matters of this description sighing heavily. Suddenly the blade of a knife and took the girl's face in his hands, and gazed only to mix new paints.

"It is you," said the sister slowly.

"Come in," cried Dorminster, "come in and see bowels of the earth for all that *I* care."

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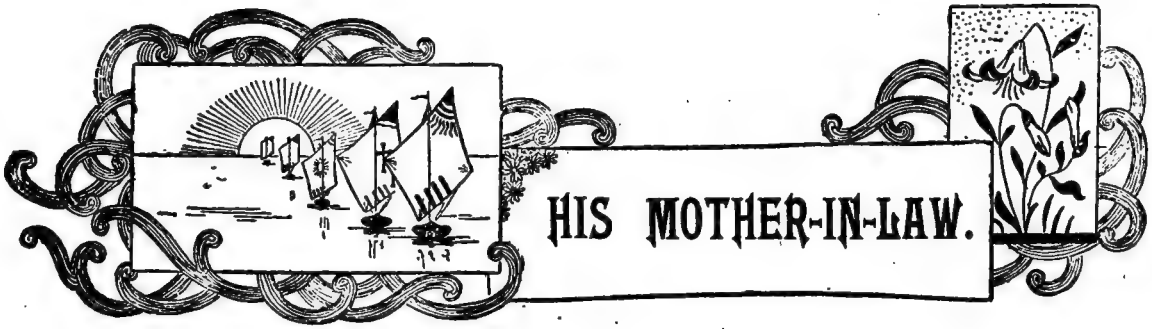

HIS MOTHER-IN-LAW.

Mrs. Bulper was a very remarkable lady. Whenever her name was mentioned it invariably produced a series of little shudders. Yet none of her friends absolutely disliked her.

When she was present they would smile on her affectionately, and listen to her utterances with respectful attention; they even came to her for advice—for Mrs. Bulper was a lady of great knowledge and experience—and were always ready to declare that "anything she didn't know wasn't worth knowing." Yet no sooner was she out of sight than the manner of her friends would undergo a most surprising change. They would draw a deep, inward breath, raise their eyes, shake their heads, and murmur "Gorgon," "Vampire," and declare in whispers that Mrs. Bulper chilled them to the very marrow of their bones.

When a lady is pronounced by her friends to be a "Gorgon" and a "Vampire," it must be evident to the meanest capacity that she must differ in many ways from the rest of her sex.

Mrs. Bulper was unlike the majority of married women in two respects. First, she was always changing her husbands; and, secondly, she was always changing her furniture and other belongings.

This requires explanation. Mrs. Bulper had buried four husbands, notwithstanding which another gentleman was forthcoming who was willing to give this much married woman his name and provide her with board and clothing. Mr. Bulper made her fifth. All the other husbands had expressed their entire satisfaction with the lady's behaviour during their lifetime and testified to the sedulous attention she had bestowed on them during their last illness.

Yet the breath was scarcely out of their bodies before the relict began to look about for a successor. It will hardly be believed but she was scarcely thirty when her fourth husband died. She then remained a widow for nearly eighteen months, and at the end of that time began to entertain the most gloomy anticipations as to the future. She did not ascribe her failure to secure another partner to any decrease in her personal attractions, for Mrs. Bulper was one of those compact little women whose bright grey eyes and healthy skin defy the ravages of time.

Furthermore she had borne her bereavements remarkably well, and the doctor's certificate silenced the voice of calumny. No, it was neither to the finger of time nor to the voice of slander she attributed this prolonged widowhood.

It was simply the result of over competition. The market was glutted with widows.

Still, for all her gloomy prediction, she managed to hook a fresh fish. The lady had a snug little income of her own, and this fact became known to Mr. Bulper, who was on the look-out for a lady so situated.

The gentleman had no weaknesses or superstitions of any kind, and being absolutely devoid of fear led the lady to the altar. One child, christened Rosie, was the result of this union, a soft-eyed, flaxen-haired creature who grew into a very pretty woman and won, when she was about eighteen, the hand and heart of Mr. John Clayton, a prosperous young stockbroker living in London.

Deeply attached to his child, Mr. Bulper, after her departure, spent so much of his time at the club that Mrs. Bulper looked round for some relaxation, and soon found in bartering and exchanging an amusement quite to her taste.

She took in all the exchange papers and studied them with as much intentness as a betting man bestows on the current odds. This new taste soon developed into a positive craze. If she bought a black silk dress one week, she was sure to exchange it for a brown one the next. The sealskin jacket was parted with for a carpet, her hearthrug for a coal scuttle, her gold watch for a sideboard, and her own sideboard for an oil-painting.

She worked at this hobby with such indefatigable energy that the changes in her home rivalled the changes in a kaleidoscope. It never presented the same appearance two weeks running. Fresh things were constantly coming in to replace those going out.

When quietude reigned among her furniture, she turned her attention to her husband, with the result that he frequently sallied forth in the evening arrayed in garments which a day or two before had been worn by someone else, although the gentleman was too engrossed by his club to pay much heed to his wife's doings.

Even when on retiring to rest one evening, he found the bed so high that he had to climb in with the aid of a chair, and the next night, not being able to find the matches, undressed, and, mounting the chair in the dark, stepped into space and came down heavily. He only swore a little, and presently forgot all about it.

The fact was, that he didn't care a brass farthing about his wife's hobby. She couldn't exchange the house for another without his knowing it. He knew the knocker, was familiar with the number, and that was enough for him.

After his death it transpired that he owed quite a large sum of money, and an execution being put in the house, Mrs. Bulper had to move into lodgings, where she quickly found it was not considered legal to exchange and barter without the consent of the owner, which in this case, being the landlady, was not forthcoming. Thus circumstanced she fell back on her own belongings,

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and, after she had exchanged everything she possessed in the world for something else, suddenly remembered she had a daughter, and that she was well married and moved a good deal in society.

Who could tell? Why, she might be able to secure another partner. True she had had a surfeit of husbands, but she disliked a solitary life, and soon convinced herself that even the society of a fresh mate would be preferable to the solitude of the widow. So when Rosie came to her husband one day with tears in her pretty eyes, saying:

"Oh, Jack, dear, poor papa is dead, and the shock has so prostrated mamma that she hasn't been able to write to me before; and she is all alone in the world, Jack, and quite broken down with grief; and there is the spare bedroom, dear, which is always being used by your friend Mr. Yardley, whom you know I never liked, and she will leave us, dear, as soon as she gets over the blow."

Jack hummed and hawed a good deal. He didn't like the idea of a woman who had had five husbands residing in his house, but when Rosie hinted that Mr. Yardley was coming too often and that he stared at her when Jack was not looking, he consented, and the next day Mrs. Bulper received an invitation from her son-in-law, and immediately began preparing for her departure.

Jack had sent his invitation with some misgivings. He knew nothing practically of mothers-in-law, except from the types presented in novels and farcical comedies, but it was better to have the relict of five dead husbands occupying the spare bedroom, than a fellow who stared at one's wife when the husband wasn't looking.

In a few days Mrs. Bulper arrived with a great number of boxes, containing a most miscellaneous assortment of things. She was delighted with her son-in-law, enraptured with her grandchildren, but not quite so sure that the house was furnished in good taste.

Rosie, who was not as yet aware of her mother's recent developments, was alarmed.

"Why, mamma, dear, Jack and I purchased everything together, and were most careful."

"Very likely, my dear," rejoined her mother; "but you must remember you are both very inexperienced, while I—well I have had more than one home, as you know, therefore I must know something about how one's house should look. This drawing-room suite is very handsome, I admit, but the blue in the carpet kills it, positively kills it."

Rosie looked startled, but realised in the course of a few weeks that all such defects as "bad contrast," "want of harmony," "doesn't blend well," were to be remedied.

Before Mrs. Bulper had been in the house a month she had thoroughly imbued her daughter with her own ideas.

Rosie had always loved our spring or autumn sales, where everything is sold at a reduction, but purchases even at a sale were expensive, whereas in exchange and bartering the excitement was just as great, and the expense nothing. But it behoved them to be cautious. Jack liked his home and belongings, and had pronounced them "deuced cosy," and he had rather a masterful way about him when angered, so Mrs. Bulper, with the skill of an old hand, rearranged the rooms one by one, leaving those which Jack used to be dealt with last. The two ladies thoroughly enjoyed themselves. Bartering was a new sensation to Rosie and an indispensable one to her mother. Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays they devoted to inspecting the goods of other people. Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays they remained at home to exhibit their own.

One Wednesday evening they missed a train at Finchley, whither they had gone to inspect some bed-linen which the owner was willing to exchange for several dozen of Jack's old claret, a very fine wine. When that gentleman knocked at his street door that evening he noticed that the servant who admitted him was a new-comer. This, however, did not surprise him, for since the day when things began to be daily moved out for other things to be brought in, servants had been exchanged as often as the furniture. Jack started slightly as he hung up his hat. He did not recognise the hall lamp, and he could have sworn his umbrella stand had had a plate glass back. There was no plate glass in the one he was looking at. Then he went into the sitting-room, looked round for a moment, beat a hasty retreat, and regained the street.

"I must have gone in next door," he murmured, but no, there was his number. What did it all mean? He rubbed his eyes; yes, it was his house, so he knocked again and was re-admitted by the same servant, who eyed him suspiciously and asked if his name was Clayton. With a sinking heart he went over the house. All the old things were gone. Carpets, furniture, curtains, pier glasses, all new—well, they were not exactly new, but they were new to him. Then a thought struck him, and he went into his study. His oak escritoire was gone. In its place reposed a mahogany one. Thick drops of perspiration stood upon his brow. There were a number of letters in the top drawer which he had intended to destroy years before. He realised in a moment that his wife had bartered it away. He also remembered seeing the newspapers devoted to that branch of commerce lying about the house. The lady who had his desk would, of course, find a key to unlock that drawer, and after reading the letters, would return them—not to him, he knew the sex too well for that—but to his wife.

They were letters he had received before his marriage. It was all through that old "Bluebeard." He had been a fool to let her in the house at all.

Presently the ladies returned, and a pretty scene ensued. Jack kept his temper till he ascertained the address of the lady who had his escritoire, and then he let out. He gave Mrs. Bulper to understand that she might change her husbands as frequently as she pleased, but she shouldn't change his furniture. Finally, he declared that he hated the look of the place, and should spend the rest of the evening at his club. But he did not go to his club; he drove straight to the address he had secured and recovered the letters. While he was tearing them into pieces on his journey home, he had time to consider his position.

His mother-in-law must go, he was determined on that. Rosie hadn't been the same woman since her mother had been in the house. If it hadn't been for that lie of Rosie's he wouldn't have had her there at all. He had spoken to Mr. Yardley about looking so earnestly at his wife, and he had denied it. He didn't want a row. Mrs. Bulper was a sensible woman, and would listen to reason, so that evening he broached his plan.

"Lor', mamma," exclaimed Rosie, horror-stricken, "you surely wouldn't marry again."

"My dear," said her husband philosophically, "your mamma has looked so happy since her bereavement, that I

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can see she realises that widowhood is not without its advantages."

"I'm afraid you're right," sighed the much-married woman.

"Of course I am," continued Jack, "when one is a widow one knows where one's husband is, but when one of yours was alive I will bet you didn't."

"You speak truly," replied Mrs. Bulper solemnly; "from first to last I never knew how Mr. Wallace, my second husband—no, he was my third—spent his evenings."

"But," returned Jack, "I think it my duty to inform you that anyone whose life is associated with the figure five is certain, according to statistics in my possession, to fall a victim to some dreadful calamity. Therefore, I say, sooner than deprive Rosie of a mother, marry once more for the sake of your only child."

Mrs. Bulper quite understood the drift of all this, and when a few days later Jack gave a party to which none but bachelors were invited, she exerted herself to the utmost, and gushed and frisked about in the style which had been so successful before. Jack's friends thought her a very nice sort of woman, so they said, but they eyed her with the same sort of curious look one assumes when gazing at a showman's bearded lady or tattooed man. They drank Jack's whisky and smoked his cigars, but they wouldn't have married the mother if she had been worth a million. They knew all about the five husbands. Jack had often spoken of them and made all sorts of jokes on the subject.

There was one gentleman, however, a Mr. Harryman, who was willing to make the sixth. Mr. Harryman was not well off, being only the transfer clerk in a South African Gold Mining Company which might pay 50 per cent. dividend this year and be in liquidation the next. Mrs. Bulper discovered this, and refused him. Jack was greatly annoyed, and spoke very sharply on the subject to his mother-in-law, and another scene took place.

"You must really understand, Mr. Clayton," cried the widow, "that when I promised to marry again I did not promise to marry anybody. I'm not of a speculative turn of mind where husbands are concerned. In addition, though not an old woman, I do not care to marry a man who may be years before he gets into a good position. Find me a husband who can keep me in comfort, never mind his age, and never mind his health, but mark, he musn't drink or gamble, and he must have a good income."

"You won't find him on this planet," groaned Jack, "I should advise you to travel."

"Travel at mamma's time of life," cried Rosie. "No, you'll stay with me, won't you, dear?" and then the two women embraced and mingled their tears while Jack walked out of the room speechless with rage.

In a few days the ladies felt their courage revive, and things came in and things went out as before. One day there would be an easy chair for Jack and the next there wouldn't. He was constantly missing articles of wearing apparel, and on one occasion found himself putting on a pair of trousers much too small for him. He flung them out of the window.

Small wonder that he was constantly quarrelling with his mother-in-law, who invariably found an ally in his wife, who had now lost that tender shyness of manner which had constituted her great charm in Jack's eyes. The soft persuasive tones were gone. In a word the timid, retiring creature had been transformed into a hard business woman.

"Thank God," groaned Jack, "the children are all right. She hasn't been able to infect them."

But at dinner one Sunday—he never dined at home now, except on Sundays—a thrill of horror went right through him, a dull despair settled on his faculties when he saw his eldest boy, Guy, exchange a piece of his Yorkshire pudding for a piece of his sister's meat. Jack said nothing, but the look he gave his mother-in-law boded ill for that lady.

Jack Clayton was no fool. He was a member of the Stock Exchange, where simplicity and innocence are unknown qualities. Mrs. Bulper had chosen to match her wits against his, and she must take the consequences.

A few evenings after a Mr. Pilsby, an old friend of Jack's father, called. Jack introduced him to the ladies, but did not treat his guest with any great cordiality, admitting, after he had gone, that he had never liked the man. "He is, however, very well off, and has a lot of property, besides being part owner in a vessel of enormous tonnage."

Mrs. Bulper pricked up her ears as she heard this, and received Mr. Pilsby the next time he called with marked *impressement*.

This seemed to greatly anger Jack, who confided to his wife that it was shameful of her mother to lure the old idiot on for the sake of his money. This was, of course, repeated to the lady, who redoubled her attentions.

Mr. Pilsby was not a pleasant gentleman to look at. He was small and mean in person, his skin was yellow and shrivelled, and his general appearance savoured of what is known as *grimy*. But he was part owner of a vessel of enormous tonnage.

"You are sure of that," she asked Jack one day.

"Quite," was that gentleman's reply.

Mr. Pilsby was ardent, and the lady was not shy. The gentleman proposed, was modestly accepted, and a few weeks later, to the delight of Jack, his father's old friend led his mother-in-law to the altar. The honeymoon was spent at Broadstairs, in the retirement of which place she had leisure to study the character of her new mate. Being a woman of experience she soon probed her new partner to his uttermost depths. The result filled her with the profoundest misgivings. On her return to town she had him watched, and presently discovered the whole truth. She had been tricked.

Jack was smoking his pipe one evening in placid contentment, watching his wife, who had now resumed her former self, and promised to barter no more, when Mrs. Pilsby entered, dragging her husband after her.

"Rosie, your husband is a villain," screamed the infuriated woman. "I have been and married his clerk."

"Well," said Jack coolly, "he is none the worse for that."

"But you told me he was part owner of a vessel of enormous tonnage."

"So he is. Aren't you, Pilsby?" said Jack sturdily.

"I believe so, sir."

"I don't believe it," shrieked his wife. "Prove it!"

"Go on," said his employer, "prove it."

Mr. Pilsby then took from his pocket a small piece of wood which he handed to his wife. It was well varnished, and attached to it was a label on which was written: "This piece of wood is a portion of the *Royal George*."

ARTHUR GOODRICH.

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Or, THE ROMANCE OF A LOST CONTINENT.

By GEO. C. WALLIS, Author of *"The Winning of Gunhild,"* etc.

CHAPTER XXIX.

"SUNDERER'S" LAST STROKE.

THE arrow sped from my bow, driven by the full force of a strong bow and a lusty arm, but my aim was hurried and shaken by the sudden rush of men, and, missing the Princess by a hand-span, the shaft was fixed, quivering, in the mainmast of her ship. She laughed a little, bidding one of her men draw it forth, and placed it in the dainty quiver that hung from her ivory-white shoulders.

I soon had my hands too full of work to follow her further movements, for her men were many and well armed, and by a cunning stratagem had divided our force in two, thus holding us at a disadvantage. Valdo and Atris were together in the stern, defending the cabin-way, whilst Orlanis, Penares, and myself were cooped up in the fore of the ship with a dozen men only.

But I never lost heart when "Sunderer" flamed before me, and right vigorously I played upon the heads and arms of the foe with its shining blade.

Though I had not had good practice with it for many years, I found that my hand retained its cunning, and the wild joy of fierce encounter came back to me with all its first freshness. So terribly I smote and slashed and cut and pierced with its keen razor edge, shearing alike through armour and shield and head-piece, that the enemy drew back a space, fighting at respectful distance, and trusting to the heavy rain of arrows from their own ship to bring me down, as it had brought seven of my men.

Presently, however, the attack closed in again, and the galling shower of missiles ceased, lest it should do equal damage to friend and foe, and in the forefront of the boarders came the Lord Dison, whom I had last seen at the Court of Listra, when I sent him sprawling on the ground for his insolence.

He was a stalwart soldier, though he carried a sinister face, and I saw that his teeth were set, and his eyes blazed with the fury of a pent-up passion. He used a great, broad blade, heavy and short, and excelled in swordcraft.

"Ha! Dison!" I cried, that I might, by enraging him, disturb the calm that a soldier should always bear, "thinkest to touch me with that clumsy flesher's knife? Hast forgotten my skill in the palmy days of old?"

"Not I," he answered, drawing nearer and waiting for a chance to dash upon me, "nor have I forgotten thy cowardly boastings. But for the fair Princess I had then done with thee what I must needs do now. How likest that, turncoat?"

His ugly weapon shot forward and upward, cutting a long gash across my chest, which but for my springing backwards sharply would have been my death.

"As much as thou relishest that!" I retorted, parrying his second stroke, and passing "Sunderer's" keen edge across his left shoulder, and unnerving his arm so that the shield fell clanging to the deck. Then we parried and cut, and slashed and pierced, and rattled blade on blade in right good earnest, till the fight around us ceased, and men stood to watch us as the fire flashed from our whirling swords.

I never thought that mortal man could stand against my skill so long as did this man, but I was weak from hunger and thirst and distraught with sorrow and anxiety besides, whilst he was fat with good living and strove for a stern revenge.

Long and savagely I played my steel upon him, attacking, defending, pressing him sorely with long, sweeping strokes and anon beating him back with a pitiless rain of blows which hacked his armour to shreds but tired my arms.

I got him down upon his knees once, only to let my sword slip from my grasp ere I could strike, and once he sent "Sunderer" spinning from my hand into the lee scuppers. For a moment I shook with fear; the next I closed with him so suddenly that his blade was rendered useless, and fastening my iron grip upon his throat, came nigh to pressing the life out of him.

However, I was not minded to slay him that way, so I let him go, and seizing my sword again, waited till his breath came back.

Then doggedly we set to work again, with feint and stroke and ringing of metal, but now I had the best of it, for his breath came fast and short and his arm was unsteady.

Now I toyed with him, not wasting my strength, and as I grew calmer and more confident he lost his coolness and struck at random, till, with a false motion, I threw him off his guard, and my trusty blade passed through his heart like a flash of light. He leapt up without cry or sound, then fell headlong on the deck.

"So endeth the days of the Lord Dison!" I said to the foe. "Let Nayrahn, whom I saw with him on your ship, now come forward if he wishes such an end!"

The enemy answered me with shouts of rage, and closed in upon us again, fighting more furiously than before, and the sharpshooters perched in the rigging of Listra's vessel began to gall us afresh, one accursed shaft laying Orlanis dead at my feet ere a dozen moments had passed.

I was growing warm to the work now, and, despite my scratches, made dreadful havoc in the opposing ranks, forcing them back foot by foot, till I joined hands with Valdo and Atris, who were holding their own well. United, my crew made bolder show, and encouraged by my exhortations and the loud din of strife

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from the windward side of Listra's ship, where Tirhak and his pirates fought, pressed the foe slowly to the bulwarks, dislodging also the few who had got foothold on our spars.

Suddenly there arose a wild cry for help from the *Ravager's* cabins, and a dense cloud of smoke poured up the ladderways, followed by forking tongues of fire. The deck grew hot, and the foe, startled, scrambled back to their own vessel as quickly as they could, endeavouring to cut the grapnel chains as they went.

Calling to my men to fall upon them and prevent their accomplishing their desire, I sprang to the wooden stair, and, despite the volumes of suffocating vapour, dashed down into the ship's interior. In a single glance I saw that the fire was running along the passages, and that the woodwork aft was blazing furiously, as though saturated with some inflammable liquid, and at once guessed that the foe had poured burning oil into the ship through the rowholes, unseen and unheard by us who were fighting above.

Raving bitterly at the malice of her who had caused this cowardly thing to be done, I groped my way to the cabin where Briseis was, brushed through the throng of frightened women who crowded round me, seized her in my arms and bore her to the fresh air of the deck. She was benumbed with the stifling smoke, nor recovered until I placed her against the mast and fanned her lovely face with Dison's dinted shield.

Then her sweet eyes opened slowly, resting their glance upon me, and she said:

"Now that I can see thy face, Arnon, I am content. Let me not stay thy hand from its duty."

I cannot explain why it was so, but at that speech of my Queen's, a great wave of love swept over me, sweet and thrilling as the first flush of joy felt by a favoured suitor, and kneeling down on the hot deck I placed my arms about her and pressed her willing lips to mine in a passionate caress, again and again.

"Thou art my love," she murmured softly, "but the Spirits grant that this be not our parting kiss."

Then I tore myself away, and with the help of others, brought up the women from below, only just in time to escape the fire, which had now firm hold of the ship's timbers.

Soon the flames leapt roaring up the stairway and out at the rowholes, the pitch between the boards of the deck began to boil and bubble beneath our feet, and smoke rolled in dark masses along the vessel's length.

I examined the boats, and found, as I expected, that the foe, in their brief visit, had stoven their bows in, leaving them useless as rotten logs. Our danger was pressing; we had no choice.

"On board Listra's ship with you all!" I cried, "if you do not want to be fuel for this fire! First our toughest warriors, and next we who have to carry our children and wounded. Up with you, my merry men, and see that they do not cut the linking chains. We will set her ship afire whilst we fight, and then we shall escape in Tirhak's craft. Forward with you, and no quarter!"

The brave fellows obeyed, though they numbered less than fifty now, and made their way on the foe's deck so splendidly, that, but for the ceaseless rain of arrows from her crosstrees and spars, we should have got our weak ones over safely. As it was, besides my Queen, only ten who were not grim-faced warriors placed foot on the other ship.

It was the prow we gained, and, placing our charge in such shelter as we could, we turned our faces aft and joined in the bitter fray. On Tirhak's deck the battle was still prolonged, the white-haired old pirate still heading his reckless men and seeking to cross swords with the traitor Nayrahn, who there led Listra's forces.

The rolling billows of smoke now swept across the deck to larboard, blinding our foes and giving us a moment's rest, which we utilised by binding our wounds and watching the old sea-dogs.

Presently Nayrahn met the grizzled veteran who so persistently sought him, and then their weapons flashed and rang, and their respective followers cheered them on. But the pirate, though a man of well-knit sinews and of passing toughness, was feebled with his age and weary with his previous exertion, and his eyes were not so steady as in his youth; so it was not long before the blade of the traitor did its work and found its way through the old man's heart.

Next moment the bow of Valdo bent, and a shaft flew whizzing in the air, stretching the victor lifeless at the side of his vanquished foe.

"Methinks that traitor will trouble us no more," said my officer grimly.

Now the pirates drove back the rebels to their own ship with a great rush, slaying them by scores as they ran, and leaping on board in hot pursuit, joined with us and pressed our foes slowly back into the stern. As we went forward, however, fresh men came up the cabinways to reinforce the foe, and from the pirate craft smoke and flame suddenly shot up, showing that she, too, had been fired by the rebels from below.

Our position was now precarious in the extreme, for the *Ravager* was already blazing like a furnace, Listra's vessel had caught fire from it, and the wind still blowing from that quarter, beat back the men who strove to cut the grappling chains or pour water on the conflagration.

Thus all three ships were ablaze on a solitary sea, and we who were on board—the sole survivors of Atlantis—instead of uniting with each other for mutual safety, were doggedly striving to spill each other's blood on the heated deck! Oh, the folly and the madness of it! and the fiendish hate of the woman who caused it all!

All told, the armed men who rallied round me now numbered seventy only, whilst the rebels mustered one hundred odd. Listra I had lost sight of for a time, but as the flames got firmer hold of the lower timbers, she appeared on deck, taking her stand in the stern, and urging on her men with madly eloquent words.

Outnumbered as we were, we still pressed on, slowly gaining ground, and heartily thankful that the clouds of smoke had dislodged the marksmen from the rigging. The roar of fierce-fanned fires was all around us now, the drifts of warm, blinding smoke swept across the deck in billows of vaporous discomfort, well-nigh taking our breaths, and causing our eyes to run with unwilling tears; and the crackling of wood and the hiss of blazing fragments falling in the sea intermingled with the cries and groans of the wounded and the shouts of the living who fought in the horrible midst.

We fought all the more desperately because we saw no hope of life or rescue when the strife was o'er; despairingly struggling as men who have resolved to sell their lives dearly if they must die, and reck not how nor whom they slay in the fever of their last moments. So continued the battle, till the sun—looming a dull, deep crimson through the dense pall that enveloped us—sloped slowly to the west, telling that it was past the hour of noon.

By then, so mercilessly had we plied our weapons, I had not a score of able followers left, and Listra had but twice as many. Yet neither band thought of yielding or asking for a truce, though the flames had seized upon the hold, and one of the hatches was a fountain spouting fire, though we could scarcely bear our feet upon the charring timbers, though some of the women shrieked aloud in their fear, and one leapt overboard in the madness of her terror.

At last, seeing her chance, the Princess commanded one half her men to fall upon us more furiously, so that we could not stir from our vantage place near the mainmast, ordering the others meanwhile to dash past us and secure our women.

Owing to their superior numbers they did this with ease, and though we gnashed our teeth with rage and strove like maddened beasts to get to their assistance, we saw our nine precious ones brought before our implacable foe.

"Bind them and throw them overboard;" said the

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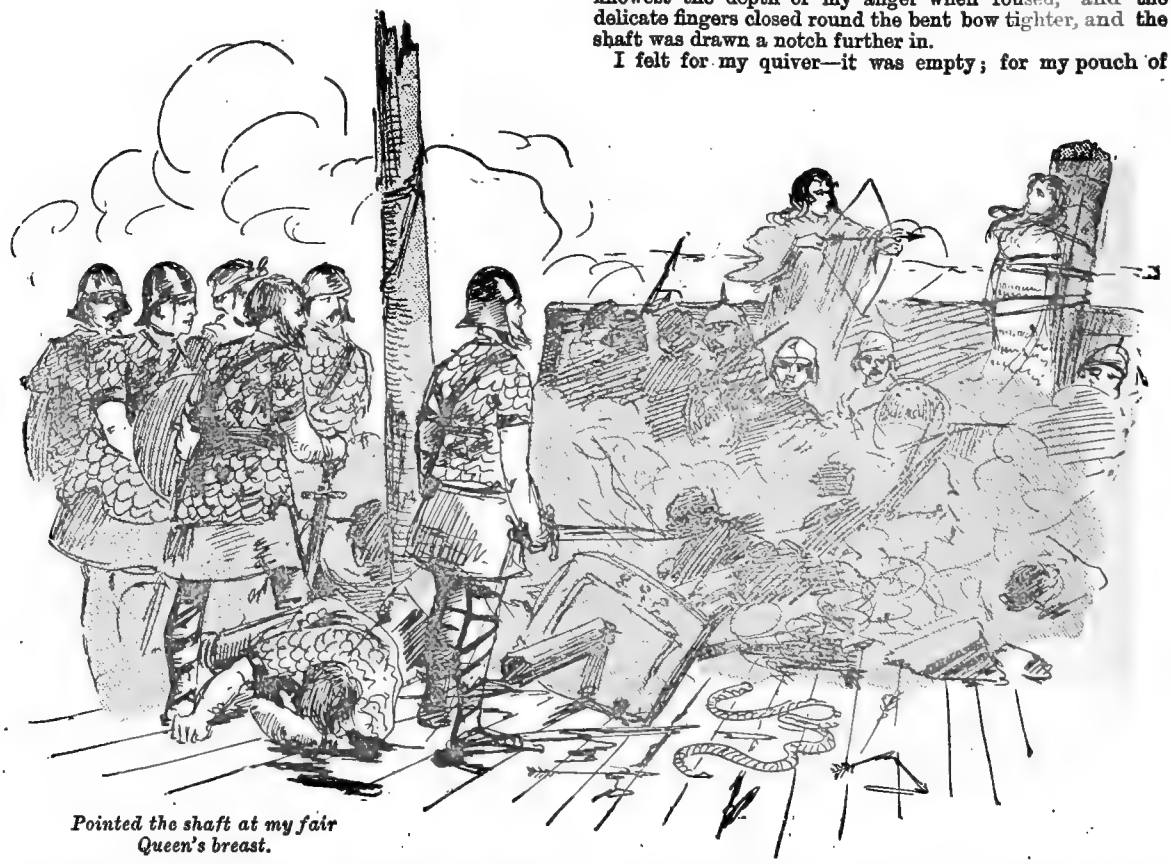
Princess, in tones that sounded strangely soft and low, "all but the trembling Queen. Bind her to the helm, here—so—and now to your work again."

The horrible command was executed with due dispatch, and soon we were fighting as before. Now Atris fell, slaying two foes as he went down; and Penares also sank in death with a broken blade in him. Save Valdo, who still laboured dauntlessly at my side, I was left with only five brave men. Said my grim-visaged follower, his keen eyes glittering with somewhat of their old-time brightness:

"It seemeth, King, that thou and I have yet a deed to do before we reach the Shadows!"

"Thou speakest truth, old friend," I answered, smiting



Pointed the shaft at my fair Queen's breast.

down a foeman as I spoke, "and it seemeth fitting also that we should. The deed shall be the saving of my Briseis and the ending of this evil leman's ill career."

"As thou sayest," the veteran replied, unceremoniously digging an opponent in the ribs to the latter's great discomfort.

But Listra heard our talk above the din of strife and fire; for all were crowded in the stern, where was comparative safety; and suddenly bade her dozen men lower their weapons while keeping on guard between her and ourselves. Instinctively we stayed our hands also, waiting in surprise for what might next befall.

I feared the very worst as soon as I heard the silvery tones of her hateful voice and saw her cast a swift, malignant glance at Briseis; and when she drew that fateful graven arrow from her dainty quiver and fitted it to her bow with deliberate carefulness and pointed the shaft at my fair Queen's breast, I knew that the greatest sorrow that the world now held for me was hanging over me as a heavy sword suspended by a spider thread.

My heart seemed to leap within its socket, my teeth gritted, and I bit my tongue till the blood ran from my mouth. Then Listra spoke, still holding the arrow pointed straight at her victim's breast.

"Arnon the King," she said, sweet and humble now, "art weary of this strife? Thou answerest not. So be it. I am weary of it and tired of staying here, e'en though naught but a watery grave await us otherwhere. Say, Macis—or Arnon, if that name pleases thee better—wilt throw thy sword away, and leave this meekling to herself and be my love from now, whether death come soon or late? An thou wilt, her life shall be spared; an thou wilt not—thou knowest the depth of my anger when roused," and the delicate fingers closed round the bent bow tighter, and the shaft was drawn a notch further in.

I felt for my quiver—it was empty; for my pouch of sling-bullets—it was empty, and I knew that the life of my Queen was in the hands of her bitterest foe, and that I was powerless to reach her before the treacherous hands could do their work.

Before I could reply, Briseis called to me, her eyes flashing defiance and her voice composed and scornful:

"Listen not to her pleading, my Arnon, even to save my life. I would sooner die knowing thee true, than live by thy falseness, e'en though it be dissembled on my behalf. See, I have no fear now that I am face to face with the end, for I know that thou wilt not be long in seeking me wherever I go. Only I would like to be laid to rest with the Passport Piece in my hand, that we may both gain the Garden of Pleasure."

"Again I ask thee, Macis—who was once my true beloved—again I ask thee if thou wilt come with me at the last, and so save this creature's life?" said Listra, mocking the Queen. "Make thy choice, and that swiftly, or my

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hand may be tempted to do the work I like not, for thy dear sake."

"Let me think!" I cried, distraught at the fearful peril, and paralysed by my utter helplessness, "let me think!"

"Heed her not, my husband," pleaded Briseis, "her promises are lies, and her endearments but temptations to separate us from each other in that greater life beyond the tomb. Nor hath she any goodness or beauty which a true man should desire. Heed her not, my dear one, to whom I say farewell."

Whether she spoke thus tantalisingly and derisively of the Princess in order to force her hand to do the deed, or whether she spoke out of the bitterness of her heart unthinkingly, I know not, but scarcely had her lips closed when Listra broke into a mocking laugh, slackening the bow slightly.

Then back she stretched it to the full again, her fierce face all awork with the evil passion in it, and with a wild cry of "Vengeance!" let the cursed arrow fly. On it sang in the heated air, well-aimed and passion-urged, piercing my beloved's heart and transfixing her to the helm. So swift was its passage from the nearness of the aim, that the smile of courage on my dear one's face never changed, but was fixed in death, and so remained when the red blood rushed forth, and, flowing down, incarnadined the whiteness of her robes.

"Ye Gods! How did I live through that fearful moment? How did I keep my reason, or hold my hand from slaying myself in that first, swift spasm of misery? I stood as one stunned and blinded, knowing not whither to turn or what to do. But not for long. With that cry of "Vengeance!" still ringing in my ears, I woke to action, and repeating it in a clarion voice, I rushed forward.

The hot blood of youth surged through my throbbing veins anew, and all the lusty vigour of my earlier years welled in my nerves and sinews, as, sword in hand, I broke through the line of foes, scattering them to right and left. They were more than a match for our men even then, and soon Valdo and I strove together, two against seven enemies, all well-armed and desperate.

But, wielded in my wrath, "Sunderer" was not to be denied, and the good sword's matchless edge tore riotously through shields and armour, helms and blades, bone and sinew, sparing not, resting not, drinking carnage with a quenchless thirst, and flaming above the victims heads like a circle of light, here, there, everywhere, as though the air was full of sharpened blades, till of the seven only one remained alive, fleeing for shelter behind the mast. I turned a moment to look for Valdo then, to see him stretched upon the deck, dying, his eyes glazing fast. A red gash across the temples told where the last blow had fallen. I knelt over him a second, inclining my head to hear his last words.

"Farewell, King and comrade," said he, "it has been a worthy fight. Fare——" and the lips closed as the speech died away in a faint whisper.

I sprang up, still with sword in hand, and turned away—for I could not weep—and seeking out the one remaining foe, drove the blade through the wretch, splitting him in half against the crackling mast. Then, smoke-grimed, bloodstained, mad with revenge, I strode heavily to where Listra crouched fearfully in the stern, and leaning on "Sunderer's" ruddy length, prodded her with my foot.

"Princess," I said with mock humility, "it grieveth me to rouse you, the more so as I am in such sorry plight to come before a lady. Natheless I make bold to think that the gravity of my message will excuse the grimness of my face. *We are alone, Princess,* in the midst of three burning ships, and unless we make hasto to bestir ourselves are likely to be burnt with them, for all but this end of the deck has fallen in."

"Spare me! spare me!" cried Listra, suddenly springing to me, and clasping my knees in supplication, all her fiery passion gone now as a snowball melted in the sun, "have pity on me, Macis, for I have done what I have done for love of thee!"

"Love!" I said scornfully, pointing to the pale form with the arrow in her breast, "call you that an instance of your love? I would rather have the hate of the foulest hag who ever walked the streets of Thinæ than the love of such as thee! Go to!" I cried, roughly shaking off her embrace, "make ready to leave this doomed vessel."

"Wilt go with me, Macis?" she pleaded, "and forget the past? The boat here I had provisioned for a cruise in case of defeat. Wilt be my own sweet Macis once again?"

"Thine, murderous leman?" I said, scathingly, raising the great blade high above her head. "Thy love, when the blood of Briseis calls for vengeance? Not if thou wert immortal, and had beauty everlasting. No, an you leave this ship as I desire it will be in the spirit, and not in the flesh—so," and I nerved my arm to strike.

"Oh, Macis!" she entreated, clinging to me all the more when I repulsed her, "slay me not for the sake of the love I bear thee!"

But I had no mercy. Black rage consumed my soul, the iron had entered into my vitals, I was mad with grief at the loss of all I held dear, and those lips which would have pleaded for pity even in that last hour were cold in death.

So I swung the great sword thrice round my head with a mighty whirl, its angry hiss drowned in the shrieks of the kneeling woman, and then, swift as a flash of light, "Sunderer" fell, passing down the quivering body, and severing it in twain!

That was my famous sword's last stroke, and, smiling a grim, sardonic smile, I turned away from the prostrate form to where the body of Briseis hung, reverently cut the thongs and the shaft that held it, placed it in the boat, and let the latter down into the sea, scrambling down the stern-chains after it.

Desperately I pulled away from the ship, nor had I gone far when the deck whereon the last tragedy had been enacted fell in with a crash, and a volume of smoke and sparks shot up from the place, telling how nearly I had been lost.

On—on—I rowed, the excitement still keeping my strength up, till I was clear of the red-glowing rocks; on—on—towards the solitary watch-tower looming up out of the solitary sea.

I reached up, clasping the nearest stone casement in my numbed hands, and resting there a moment, looked back upon my track.

The sky was of cloudless blue, deep almost to darkness, not a wave ruffled the wilderness of waters, and the edge of the sun glowed in the west like the curve of a golden shield. All was still, and the oneness of the whole was unbroken by sight or sound, save where, on the far-off rim of sea and sky, rose a curl of smoke and a tongue of flame.

(To be concluded.)

On the Conclusion of this Story,

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A Dialogue of the Line.

SCENE: A first-class railway carriage. Julia Northcote, a young lady of attractive appearance, discovered alone in a corner of the compartment. Papers, travelling-rug, dressing-bag, etc.

Julia (yawning): "I wish this train would start. It's five minutes after the time already! My foot-warmer is getting cold."

(The guard whistles, train starts.)

(Porter heard speaking outside.)

"Here you are, sir."

(The door is opened, and a man springs in, falling over Julia's feet.)

Stranger: "A thousand pardons! I hope I did not hurt you."

(Their eyes meet.)

Julia: "*Mr. Emerson!* No, it can't be!"

Emerson: "Why not? Have I altered in two years? Am I past recognition?"

Julia: "Two years! Is it really two years?"

Emerson (seating himself opposite her): "No—one year and nine months."

Julia (blushing): "Since——"

Emerson (sighing): "Since——"

(Silence.)

Julia (presently): "I thought you had quite forgotten me."

Emerson (aside): "Thought right for once."

Julia: "And it is never pleasant—to be forgotten."

Emerson: "How cruel you have grown!"

Julia: "Yet I had reason to form that conclusion. You remember our visit to the Hobson's, and the ball?"

Emerson (looking uncomfortable): "I do!"

Julia: "Why did you leave early the next morning, without saying good-bye?"

Emerson: "Business. I was called away by telegram."

Julia: "And you never wrote. You—you said at the ball you would write!"

Emerson: "Did I?"

Julia: "Have you forgotten that too? Really your memory——"

Emerson (speaking quickly): "It was so long ago, and things alter. Why, in these past months I've been to the other side of the world. I only returned to England last week. What have you been doing in the meanwhile? Getting married?"

Julia (a mischievous twinkle in her eyes): "Yes!"

Emerson (relieved): "Really! I congratulate you—I mean—I congratulate him. He—he's an awful lucky fellow. May I ask his name?"

Julia (hesitating): "Dickson—Nugent Dickson."

Emerson (expanding): "'Pon my word, some people have good fortune, notably the successful Mr. Dickson. It makes us poor bachelors horribly envious."

Julia: "Why not go and do likewise?"

Emerson: "You are cruel, you know the reason perfectly well."

Julia: "I know the reason?"

Emerson: "Yes, you said just now that I had forgotten! It was an unkind cut, Miss Northcote—I mean Mrs. Dickson—but I did not deserve it, though I confess my conduct may have appeared—strange, inexplicable—at the time. I feel I owe you an explanation——"

Julia: "Go on."

Emerson: "You alluded just now to a ball. How vividly I remember every detail of that pleasant evening. Our talk under the trees in the garden—the dances we had together."

Julia: "Eight waltzes, and two sets of lancers."

Emerson: "And then the drive home, do you remember that drive?"

(He leans forward and touches her hand.)

Julia: "It was very wrong."

Emerson: "Was it? I did not think so at the time."

Julia: "Aunt Lena went to sleep in the corner of the carriage."

Emerson: "I always liked your Aunt, she was such a tactful woman."

Julia: "But your explanation——"

Emerson: "Is simply this. I fell madly—desperately in love with you. I felt irresistibly drawn to you, but my better nature told me you were too good for a penniless fellow like myself, I could never have made you happy."

Julia: "Penniless! you had a thousand a year, an assured income!"

Emerson: "Bah! What is a paltry thousand a year nowadays! A woman with your tastes—your beauty—would have been miserable on such a pittance! So I sacrificed my feelings, and with lacerated heart tore myself away."

Julia: "How noble of you!"

Emerson (aside): "She swallows it!"

Julia: "I thought it was for another reason—I fancied you did not care—I cruelly misjudged you!"

Emerson: "I hoped on my return to find you still free. I had luck in those distant lands, and should now have been in a position to ask your hand. But Fate has been against me from the first. I can but bow my head and except the inevitable. Dear Mrs. Dickson, you will think kindly of me sometimes."

Julia (looking up under her eyelashes): "Very kindly."

Emerson (much affected): "And may—I—see you occasionally?"

Julia: "But do you really——"

Emerson (holding her fingers): "Yes, I do."

Julia: "And if it were possible—if it were not for Nugent—you would——"

Emerson: "I would marry you to-morrow."

(Miss Northcote draws the glove from her left hand, and reveals its ringless state.)

Emerson (staring stupidly): "Oh! I say!"

Julia: "You may well look surprised, I was only joking after all, and you must forgive, because——"

Emerson: "Because?"

Julia: "I have learnt your secret. I know now that

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I am loved, that all my hard thoughts of you were base and unfounded. I am ready to forgive. But how pale you look, Mr. Emerson! I am afraid my happy news was too much for you, I—I was hardly considerate, I did not realise the strength of your love, the depth of your devotion."

Emerson (looking wildly round for a chance of escape): "This—er—this is—er—my station. I—I will write."

Julia (as the train slows): "Oh! what a pity, and just as our talk was getting interesting. You won't forget to write this time, will you?"

Emerson (springing out): "Indeed I shall not."

Julia (leaning through the window): "What a wretched little place!"

Emerson: "Let me put up the window, it is so cold for you."

Julia: "But now we can't talk. There is such a thing as being too considerate."

Emerson: "Good-bye, Miss Northcote."

Julia (as the train starts): "I wonder he did not call me Julia! Some men are so reticent."

Emerson (to porter): "How soon can I get a train on to Longly?"

Porter (grinning): "Why it's just gone! Didn't you get out of it? There ain't another for a three hour, and that's sure to be late. Oh, they do travel on our line!"

WINIFRED GRAHAM.

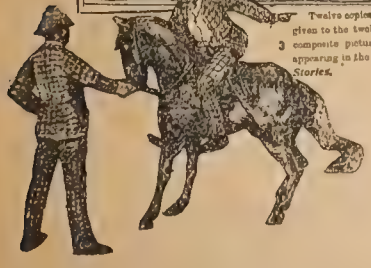
RESULT OF JUMBLED STORY COMPETITION.—No. 26.

THE first prize of £5 goes to Miss Mannion, 16, St. George's Road, Ladbroke Grove, London.

The following receive £1 each: Miss Grant, 4, Morrab Terrace, Penzance, Cornwall; F. C. Piper, Kenersley House, Cliftonville, Margate; H. P. Wright, 72, Evelina Road, Nunhead, S.E.; Miss E. Crane, 143, Cannon Street, London; Mrs. E. A. Hallam, 46, Clifton Road, Peckham.

(*See page* 121.)

Twelve copies of "FOOTLIGHT FAVOURITES" will be given to the twelve persons who make up the cleverest composite picture of all or any of the illustrations appearing in the Christmas Double Number of *Short Stories*.



HIS CONCEPTION OF TRILBY

This is a reproduction of one of the attempts sent in for the Christmas Number Competition (No. 3) in *Short Stories*, the result of which appears on page 126.

VENUS.

"AN' so your dad ain't going a-whalin' any more," exclaimed Miss Elizabeth Shoreham semi-interrogatively, as her eyes wandered from the walrus tusk which adorned one of the walls to the black eyes of the only occupant of the room besides herself.

"No," replied Venus. "He says as he ain't been for ten years; the whales have forgot him an' he don't see a use of scrapin' acquaintance with 'em again."

"Drat that snag!" interpolated Miss Elizabeth, as she came upon a snarl in the wool which, under her guidance, was gradually forming itself into an article of wearing apparel. "Seems to me I never run against nothin' but snags all my life. If 'tain't been in the wool, it's been in my relations, an' if 'tain't been in my relations it's been in——"

"I didn't know you *had* any relations, Miss Shoreham."

"Well, I haven't had for years back, but their memories is all the time a-croppin' up an' a-pesterin'," exclaimed Miss Elizabeth, as the almost-forgotten death of the last one recalled vividly her own advancing age.

"Do you mean ghosts?" asked Venus, dropping a stitch in her sewing.

"Ghosts? Never!" snapped Miss Elizabeth. "I don't believe in no such animals. It's just snags—plain, every-day snags. Ghosts only bother you night times; snags bother days as well as nights, an' for one that's alone, with no friends, an' no one that cares more'n twopence for you——"

"I hope you don't call dad an' me snags, Miss Shoreham."

"N-no, *you're* no snag!" admitted Miss Shoreham, "but your dad—he is just the worst I ever see, an' I wish I knew what way he's going to jump next."

"Why do you want to know that?" ventured Venus.

Miss Elizabeth hesitated. *Could* she summon sufficient courage to confide in the daughter of the man to whom, with her fading charms, she clung as the only possible escape from a state of single blessedness, now that all other means of escape were married, dead, or in other ways rendered unavailable? She decided to risk it.

"Venus Hardy, I think you're mighty honest, an' that's why I'm a-goin' to make you one o' them confidence women like they had in days of old. Has your dad never said anything against me?"

"Why, no, Miss Shoreham! He—er—*likes* you very much."

Venus's eyes twinkled mischievously.

"I thought *that* much," commented Miss Elizabeth, laying aside her knitting, "but he has never mentioned nothin' stronger? Does he never say anything?"

She saw the laughter hidden away in the girl's eyes, and changed both her tone and subject abruptly.

"Now, Venus Hardy, you're a-laughin' at me inside—I can see the front o' your dress shake—I might 'a' known it."

Miss Elizabeth . . . delivered her ultimatum.

"I didn't mean to," apologised Venus.

"I'm not so sure," snapped Miss Elizabeth. "How'd he ever come to call you Venus, anyway?"

"I don't know. I never asked him."

"It's a mighty embarrassin' sort of a name," went on Miss Elizabeth. "If I was called Venus, seems to me I'd feel as if I wa'n't dressed proper."

Venus flared up.

"I've been called it all my life, an' no one can say I haven't been dressed proper."

"H'm. I don't know," observed Miss Shoreham, still inclined to be irritable, "who sews 'em for you?"

"I sew 'em myself."

"Yourself? Who fits 'em?" continued the lady.

"Dad!"

"Your dad! *That* accounts for the look of 'em," exclaimed Miss Shoreham, greatly relieved. The solution to that riddle had bothered her for a long time. "Jim Peter's wife swears you go out on the beach nights, an' picks up clothes what comes ashore from wrecks."

Venus turned indignantly.

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"Jim Peter's wife needn't measure me by herself," she said.

"I gave her a well-baked piece o' mind about it, too," went on Miss Elizabeth, studying the effect of her words from over the tops of her spectacles, "for I know Jim took a cradle what drifted ashore the night afore she had that clearin'-up shower of twins, an' it come mighty handy, for, if it hadn't been for that, some o' them other young ones would 'a' had to 'a' slept in the fireplace. But if your dad is a-lookin' after the fit o' your clothes as well as your eatin' an' drinkin', seems to me his hands is as full as Jim Peters', and someone ought to be a-helpin' him carry his load. No wonder the man ain't no time to go a-whalin'. Does he never suggest that you'd better be a-havin' a mother? You ain't had one as far back as I can think."

Venus shook her head but did not look up, for there were tears in her eyes.

"How old are you?" continued the inquisitor.

"I don't know. Dad's never told me."

"Just as I thought." Miss Elizabeth rose and, placing a hand on each hip, delivered her ultimatum. "Venus Hardy, listen while I tell you somethin'. Your dad is a-goin' to be looked after proper if I have to do it myself, or, the first thing he knows, he'll be beached high an' dry same as any other fellow."

Venus looked up. Her eyes were bright now and her cheeks were flushed. Womanlike, she longed for a confidant of her own sex and had reached the point where further restraint was an utter impossibility. She *must* tell someone—*anyone*.

"Miss Shoreham," faltered the girl, "somebody's asked me to help make a home already."

"Already—*who?*"

"I'm a-keepin' that in the family yet."

"Does your dad know?"

"N-no!"

"Well, as he's the only family you've got, seems to me 'tain't *in* the family yet. You'd better think me the family for a minute."

"No, for you ain't!" said Venus decidedly.

"Venus Hardy, you may not mean disrespect, but you sound mighty near it, an', if I should be a-comin' into the family, you want to keep on my sweet side."

"*Now* I know what is the matter with you," cried Venus, the truth suddenly breaking upon her, "you're makin' up to dad—oh, Miss Shoreham!" and Venus levelled her index finger at her visitor and laughed.

The visitor was capable of retaliating, however, and did so without delay.

"If you wasn't stone-blind about your own love affairs, Venus Hardy, you could see that your fore an' aft's turned 'round, for it's your dad as is a-makin' up to me."

"Then I *am* glad—really I am," cried the girl, as all doubts and fears fell away from her heart, "for then I don't *have* to feel very bad about leavin' dad, do I, seein' as he can get you to provide for him? I've *tried* to feel bad about goin', but I can't, for Jack is—oh, he's just like dad, only he's younger, an' smarter, handsomer, an'—an'—*everything!*"

"Is it Jack Nobles?"

Venus blushed.

"How'd you guess?"

"Ask me no questions, an' I'll answer no lies."

"You won't tell dad?"

"That hangs on what your dad tells me."

"Then it's all arranged," exclaimed the girl, "you make dad push me towards Jack, an' I'll push dad at you."

Miss Elizabeth tossed her head, and, indicating a closed door beneath the walrus tusk, said: "Tell me what's in there afore I compromise myself."

"I don't know what's in it," replied Venus.

"You mean you don't want to tell. As often as I've been in this place, I never see in that room yet, an' the shutters are shut on the outside, too—I've noticed that."

"Well I've never seen in it, either, for the door's always locked, but that ain't why I haven't been in, for dad often told me to wait till he takes me himself. Sometimes he takes in bundles, too, but he says he's goin' to show 'em to me as soon as I am old enough to understand."

"Bundles? H'm. I ought to know what's in there, too, afore I become your mother. Maybe it's your other mother he has in there—what do you s'pose?"

"I don't know."

The clock on the wall struck five. Venus rose hurriedly.

"Goodness, it's late! I must get supper—but you just sit still an' I'll see dad take you home."

"No, no," simpered Miss Elizabeth, "'twould be so conspicuous."

"He'll be home soon," urged Venus, determined to facilitate her own love affair if possible by facilitating that of her father and Miss Elizabeth. "He seemed so jolly this mornin' about somethin' that perhaps he's goin' to ask you to-day, an' he'll be glad to find you without havin' to trot 'round to the neighbours to hunt you up."

"Then I'll help you get supper," exclaimed Miss Elizabeth impulsively, determined to give material evidence of her gratitude.

"There ain't enough work for two. You'd better finish your knittin', for dad may never give you another chance. Just sit still an' I'll keep runnin' in an' see if anything's wanted," and Venus repaired to the kitchen, humming a tune as she went.

Miss Elizabeth sat still as directed for a few moments only. For years that locked door had been to her another unsolved riddle.

"Seems as if I hear someone a-breathin' there," she soliloquised, as she edged nearer to the object of her thoughts, and, at the same time, held her knitting so that she could begin work at once in case of interruption. "He may be a-keepin' one o' them harem-scarems from Africa I've read of," she continued, "an' if he is, it's my duty to find out, for if I can stop that man from a-bein' a Bluebeard by a-marryin' him, it'll be a worthy action that won't throw me back when Gabriel gets 'round to a-tootin' his last trumpet, an' as he ain't tooted his first one, as far as I can remember, goodness knows how long he'll take a-gettin' to his last one, unless he toots it first."

Miss Elizabeth looked out across the sands and the fisher boats to where the waves restlessly tumbled over one another in a mad race to reach the high-water mark. No one was looking her way, and Venus was still singing in the kitchen. The coast seemed clear. She scrutinised the door of the mysterious room closely, and made the agreeable discovery that the key was in the lock. The temptation was irresistible, and, with pulses throbbing wildly, Miss Elizabeth turned the key and threw open the door.

"Can't see a thing. It must be something dreadful!" she observed, quaking inwardly, as she peered into the darkness. Then something large in one corner of the room caught her eye. Miss Elizabeth gazed at it until

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becoming aware of its full proportions, and overwhelmed by the discovery, she unthinkingly stepped into the forbidden apartment.

"A pianner!" she gasped. "A thing I've wanted since the day afore I was born. No wonder he didn't want Venus to see it—'twould 'a' made her feel dreadful to be a-livin' here with it a-knowin' all the time 'twas for me. I bet she's been in here just the same."

The sound of a door shutting caused Miss Elizabeth a guilty start, and, as she stepped back into the sunlit room beyond, her shoulder was grasped by a powerful hand.

"Eliza Shoreham," exclaimed the owner of the hand angrily, "if I ever catch you in that room again, you can count yourself among the dead an' missin'! What'd you do in there?"

"Why, good-evenin',' Cap'n!" gasped the trembling woman in as cheery a voice as her lungs and palpitating heart could produce. Her Bluebeard idea certainly seemed no idle fancy. "I was a-knittin' an' felt a draught, an' I just peeped in to see if the window was open."

The Captain released Miss Elizabeth and pushed forward a chair. She wasn't quite sure as to whether she ought to run or sit down, but another look at the Captain's face convinced her that he really wished her to be seated, so she obeyed his facial command with as little delay as possible and prepared herself for anything from a proposal to a bomb.

"I was countin' on Venus goin' in that room first," said the Captain. His manner was still stern, but his anger was cooling rapidly. He and anger had been estranged for twenty years.

"I dare say she has seen it," ventured Miss Elizabeth, by way of apology for her own indiscretion.

"Seen what?" inquired the Captain suspiciously.

"The pianner, of course."

"You saw the pianner?" thundered the Captain in such a terrible voice that Miss Elizabeth felt that the enormity of her crime was beyond all earthly computation, and she breathed with greater difficulty than ever. "Eliza Shoreham, sit where you are. As long as you've seen that much, I'm goin' to tell you somethin' mighty important, but if you ever lets it out to anything havin' breath, I'll chase you over the earth till you're so flabbergasted you'll jump off it."

"I'll never—no, never!" faltered Miss Elizabeth contritely. "Here—I'll give you a hand," for the Captain had gone to a cupboard while speaking and was returning with some cups and saucers to place upon the table.

"No, you won't!" he said curtly. "You stay where you are. You'll need your strength to listen with."

And Miss Elizabeth stayed where she was.

"How does Venus strike you nowadays, Eliza?" asked the Captain, as he went towards the cupboard a second time.

"Seems to me she's a lovable kind of child," replied Miss Elizabeth with soulful emphasis; then, resolving to dare all, she added: "Seems to me I wouldn't mind a-havin' her for a daughter myself."

"Now wouldn't you, Eliza? Well, there's only one way that could happen, but I don't see no signs of it."

The Captain laughed aloud. He was returning to his usual good nature, but Miss Elizabeth was not altogether cheered by his words.

"Why, I've just been offered command of another whaler, but I'm goin' to refuse it on account of her, although there's been a deal of money offered. I wouldn't leave that girl for all the whales in the sea an' there's more'n a few of 'em."

"Cap'n," broke in Miss Elizabeth nervously, "before you go on, I want to ask you—I most forgot—where's Venus's mother?"

"Venus's *mother?*"

"Yes—your other wife?"

"My other *wife?*"

The Captain laughed again and brought his clenched fist down upon the table with great force.

"Eliza, true as you're settin' there, I never had a wife in my life."

Miss Elizabeth rose to her feet while the blood rose to her cheeks.

"An' you ask me to stay here an' talk to you, Cap'n Hardy, with that woman a-hangin' over your head? Where is she?"

"I don't know."

"How old's Venus?"

"You've got me again, Eliza."

"You mean to tell me you don't know the age of your own flesh and blood?" fairly shrieked Miss Elizabeth.

"She ain't no flesh and blood o' mine!"

"Not? Who named her?"

"I did."

"Where've *you* been to hear that name?"

The Captain gazed at his questioner in astonishment.

"Why ain't you never heard of Venus? She was the most beautiful lady on earth, Eliza, an' she was throwed up by the sea."

"Do you mean to say that girl's a—a—mermaid?"

"You've guessed it pretty near, Eliza!"

"Go on, Cap'n—I'm a-tryin' to swallow it."

"Then you'd better chew it well, Liz, or it'll choke you. Do you remember twenty years ago to-day?"

Miss Elizabeth shook her head emphatically.

"Well, you ought to, for you were no kitten-fish even then; but I guess that was the year you was off in your head about Jim Peters elopin' with Sal. That's another time you missed it, Eliza. Anyway, it'll just be twenty years to-night since there was the biggest storm out there I ever saw, an' there was a wreck—but it was too far out for anybody to help—an' the ship went down an' no one's ever heard of it or anyone on it. I was on the beach all night, an' towards mornin' there was a spar tossed by the waves, an' it came right to my feet. There was somethin' tied on it."

"Venus?"

"'Twas a bundle, an' when I looked close, 'twas a kid, sure enough. I thought 'twas dead, but I give it a chance, an' took it to my cabin, an' put it by the fire, and blessed if the kid didn't come to life, an' fidget so, an' holler, that I knew 'twas a woman, an' I guessed right, for she's in the kitchen there a-singin'. That's why I called her Venus, 'cause she was throwed up by the sea."

"Seems to me you might 'a' named her Seaweed. Why didn't you bring her to me?"

"You, Liz. Just look back that far an' remember yourself. You was set on havin' Jim Peters then, an' you'd have sent me to kingdom come mighty quick. My, but you was stiff those times. The kid hollered loud, too, an' I didn't know whether to throw it back into the water or to take it to the asylum, but when I thought o' givin' it away, the loneliest kind of a feelin' came over me, an' I resolutioned I'd just keep that kid, an' find out myself what this married life is that folks talks so much about—for I had a young one there already without the expense an' bother of a wife throwed

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in. Then, thinks I, if married life gets too much for me, I'll put the kid in the asylum, an' married life can be blowed. You see, Eliza, 'twas a sight better'n adoptin' a wife, too, for, if the experience was not successful, it might 'a' been a job to put *her* in the asylum with the kid. I kept the young one in a basket for a whole month, an' fed it on a bottle, but it did nothin' but holler, grin, an' sleep, and never spoke. Then I went off on a whaler, an' took it with me—I took it on board in a basket. I didn't come back to this place till ten years or so after, an' then Venus come with me as my daughter, for most on 'em had forgot me an' asked no questions. I tell you, Eliza, married life has agreed with me as far as its gone, but now I'm gettin' old, seems as if sometimes I most wish I had a wife instead."

Miss Elizabeth grew even more interested.

"Have you found the woman, Cap'n?"

The Captain brought his hand down upon the table again.

"That I have, Liz, an', whenever I've seen what she'd like or has wished for, I've got it an' put it in that room which you sneaked into. There's a Chinese wash-basin in there that she wished for five years back, an' it's been in that room ever since the day she wished for it—an' a work-basket—an' a sailor's hat—a bathin' suit—a pianner——"

"A pianner is such a *grand* ornament," interpolated Miss Elizabeth ecstatically. "I know a man that plays the accordion mighty sweet, an' I'll ask him over. I'm sure he'll play beautiful on it."

"You'll have to see Venus about that party."

A plate dropped from the Captain's hand.

"What's *she* got to do with it?"

"Why—she's the one!"

The Captain's face beamed with joy, and Miss Elizabeth's heart stopped beating for five awful seconds.

"Venus, your *daughter?*"

"She ain't my daughter."

"She's just the same."

The truth dawned upon Miss Elizabeth and she sobbed hysterically:

"Oh, you *wicked* man! What do you mean by a-leading me on like this and then a dropping me down as if I was a poisoned snake?"

"An' you thought I was after you? Oh, Lord, what a joke!" and the Captain laughed so boisterously and so heartily that Venus in the kitchen felt confident that Miss Shoreham was soon to be a mother to her.

"Two can play at jokes, Bill Harding," exclaimed Miss Elizabeth in her wrath, "you just go on an' laugh an' when you've done I'll take a turn an' I'll catch a sight bigger whale than you ever thought of catching, too!"

"All right, Liz, go on an' catch your whale, but seems to me you'd better give up that notion—or you may get swamped."

Miss Elizabeth tossed her head defiantly and prepared to throw her bomb.

"How do yer know Venus'll have you?"

"How d'ye know? How d'ye know the sun rose this morning?"

"Well, when it sets to-night, you want to look out it don't set on you. Does she know you are not her dad?"

"No, but I'll soon 'range that."

"Then you'd better 'range it afore Jack Nobles 'ranges it for you."

"Jack?"

The Captain stopped suddenly in his ninth trip from the cupboard to the table.

"Do you s'pose she'll have you when she can get him?"

A plate dropped from the Captain's hands. He stooped to pick up the pieces and forced himself to laugh, but the laugh was hollow and lacked heartiness.

"Marry him? Pshaw! That's a pretty good-sized whale, after all—but I can see through it. You want to get quits with me for vexing you."

"All right, Bill Harding—I can't stay to supper for private reasons, but sometime when you find out that Venus don't want you no more than she does the measles, maybe you'll think of a woman you might 'a' had——"

The Captain gazed blankly at Miss Elizabeth. He saw her gather up her things and go towards the door.

"*You*, Elizabeth?" he inquired incredulously.

Miss Elizabeth turned a flushed, angry face upon him from the doorway.

"Me? Not much! I was only askin' for a friend. She wrote an' told me if I knew of any old man what wanted someone to make a home for him, to let her know. I'll write an' tell her I don't—that the only old men I know about here what ain't dead is fools."

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And Miss Elizabeth, believing that she had given the proper vent upon her wounded feelings, turned and walked down the beach, confronted all the way by the fact that her matrimonial chances possessed the blackest possible outlook. She had certainly done her best, but there seemed no use in trying to thwart fate any longer, and, once in her cottage, she gazed upon the five cardboard mottoes worked in many-hued worsteds that adorned one of her walls.

For many years they had been her sole sentimental props, and, as she slowly read them aloud to herself for the last time, her eyes filled with tears. They could be of no further use to her, and, mounting a chair, she removed them from the wall one by one. "Watch and Pray," "The Lord Will Provide," "While there's Life there's Hope," and "Where there's a Will there's a Way," she burnt in the kitchen fire; but when she came to "What's Home without a Mother," her heart failed her. She could not burn that one, and, wrapping it up carefully, she put it away to send to Venus as one last desperate hint to the Captain.

She removed them from the wall one by one.

"If you don't bring him round," she said to the motto, "nothin' will."

For some time after Miss Elizabeth had gone, the Captain stood motionless in the centre of the room, gazing far out over the sand and sea. He was trying to believe that Miss Elizabeth had only spoken in jest, but something in his heart told him that she had not.

"I saw his arm round Venus the other night, but I never suspected," he murmured. Then, going to the door of the mysterious room, he opened it and entered. It was some time before he had opened the windows and shutters, but the sun shone at length upon the accumulated dust and cobwebs and the strange collection of modern and antique furniture. Then he heard Venus coming and went to meet her.

Venus was still singing, as she came from the kitchen with a steaming teapot in her hand, for she wanted to give Miss Elizabeth fair warning of her approach.

"You are my little true lover,
You are my little boy blue,
But I'm your old auntie, darling.
And I cannot marry you."

So sang Venus, with a curtsey to the Captain when she had finished. The Captain turned his head away and clumsily brushed a tear from his cheek.

"What's this I hear about you an' Jack?" he asked, without looking at her.

Venus set the teapot upon the table, and turned to him confused. Then she noticed that he was alone.

"Where's Miss Shoreham?" she cried. "Don't you think she's nice, dad? You like her better 'an me, don't you?"

The Captain gazed longingly into the girl's eyes. She went to him and he put his arms about her.

"You're ahead of 'em all with me, lassie," he said.

"I'm so sorry—you look sad, dad. What did she do to you?"

"I'm sad at thinkin' I'm goin' to lose the lassie I've loved so long. Do you love Jack?"

Venus hid her face on the Captain's shoulder and her reply was inaudible, but the Captain thought he understood.

"All right, lassie," he said with as much cheerfulness as he could muster. "It's all right, but why didn't you tell your old dad about it an' not keep it back. It struck me so sudden, I can't see it clear yet, an' you know I wouldn't hurt a hair in your head, an' if you wanted all the Jacks in the world, I'd never 'a' took 'em from you; an' now, lassie, I want to ask you something,—for I ain't been married, an' don't know what love's like—would it make you give up your dad for—for—now sposin' Jack an' me was going' away on a long voyage—don't stir, I only said *sposin'*—an' sposin' you could only go with one of us—what one would you choose, lassie."

Venus started back from the Captain, and, in a voice trembling with superstitious awe, said: "Dad, I've dreamt the same dream the last three nights, but it didn't seem as if I was sleeping. Every night it seemed as if I was awake an' listenin' to the waves break on the beach till I couldn't stand the noise: an' I got up and went out to stop 'em from singing—an' every time Jack an' you was there in different boats going away for ever and ever—an' every time, as soon as I came down to where the waves wash my feet, Jack an' you stretched out your hands to me an' I had to choose what one I'd sail with."

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The Captain gazed lovingly into the girl's eyes.

"An' did you always choose the same one, lassie?"

The Captain's wealth of love for the girl shone in his eyes. Venus nodded her head.

"An' who was it?"

The Captain grew faint and looked away from the girl for there was no response and no sound save the breaking of the waves upon the beach.

"Was it me?"

Still there was no answer. Venus was gazing at him half in fear, and half in adoration. Their eyes met and she slowly shook her head.

The Captain spoke hurriedly so that the girl might not notice the tremour in his voice.

"Venus, I was goin' to speak to you about somethin' similar to-day, an' I'm mighty glad now that Jack's going to provide for you, for you dreamt part right—I'm going away on a long voyage."

"No, dad, no! You said you wouldn't."

"But I've had a fine offer, lassie, an' I can't refuse, for I haven't been on the sea for years, an' I'm pinin' for it."

"Don't go!"

Venus threw her arms about his neck.

"I must, lassie, an' there's no time to lose. It'll bring back the old times, too—the times when you was small, an' we used to sail together an' you said you'd marry me when you got as big as me, an' now you're goin' back on your word—but there, it's all right lassie, for Jack'll make two o' me, any day. Where are you goin' to live?"

"Jack's saved money, an' he's waitin' to hear what you'd say first."

"Then tell him I say you've lived in this house for ten years, an' you can't leave it—that it's your house—that I give it to you—an' if he wants you bad enough to come here to live, he can move in just as soon as he can find a parson."

Venus wept for very joy.

"Oh, dad, can we?"

"I've suspiciened you'd be wantin' to be married before long, an' I've been preparin' for it. Look in there!"

Venus had not noticed the open door, and now, as she looked through it into the mysterious room beyond, her joy knew no limit.

"Oh, dad, there's a pianner!"

The Captain was as much excited as she was.

"Yes, an' you an' Jack must bang on it every day—an' do you see the Chinese wash-basin?"

Yes, Venus saw that and many other things of which she had envied others the possession.

"An' when you wash your pretty face in it, you'll think of your old dad?"

"Yes," promised Venus happily, "an' I'll only use it Sundays, so's it'll keep."

"An' now look out through the window, lassie—the first time you ever looked through it, who did you see comin' up the beach?"

"Jack!"

The Captain closed the door.

"I can't show you more now, lassie, for I've a deal to do afore I go. No, I can't stay till Jack comes—some other time'll do just as well—you tell him—tell him it's all right an' that I'm goin' away an' you an' him must keep house for me till I come back, for I may come back with a large family."

"Then you are going to marry Miss Shoreham, dad?"

"Never you mind who I'll be marrying—an' now, lassie, stand here in the doorway an' smile at him—show him the room I've been savin' for you—stop lookin' at me like that—look out at him—beckon to him, lassie. Yes, that's right! Don't you care if the whole earth does see you—he's yours, an' you're goin' to get him. There! He sees you an' he's comin'. Who wouldn't come to you when they see your pretty face? There, lassie, kiss me once more afore Jack knows he can have you. Good luck to you an' good luck to Jack—an'—God bless you both!"

He could say no more but crept noiselessly out into the kitchen. And the girl stood in the doorway and beckoned to her lover as he came up over the sands, and their hearts were as light as the foam of the sea for they never guessed that their happiness had driven an old man forth on a voyage from which he would never return.

JOHN HALFORD.

Key to Jumble Story.—No. 26.

A HEROINE OF SOCIETY. (See page 115.)

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THE QUEEN AGAINST OWEN

BY

Allen Upward

Author of "Secrets of the Courts of Europe," "The Prince of Calkistan." etc., etc.

SUMMARY.

ELEANOR MARGARET OWEN is charged with the murder of her benefactress, Ann Lewis. Charles Prescott is in love with Eleanor, and holds the brief for the prosecution, while his friend, George Tressamer, is also in love with Eleanor, and holds the brief for her defence. The prosecution is vigorously pressed by John Lewis, deceased's nephew. The case comes on at the Mynyddshire Assizes. The result of the cross-examination of Lewis by Tressamer is that public suspicion, which, for a time, rested on Lewis, is completely removed. The examination of witnesses continues, and the court adjourns. On re-opening, Tressamer commences his speech for the defence.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE DEFENCE.

"MAY it please your lordship. Before I go into the case for the prisoner, I have to submit that the Crown has not produced sufficient evidence to warrant a conviction.

"It has been laid down by the authority of Lord Hale, which your lordship will find quoted on page 276 of *Archbold*, that no man should ever be convicted of murder or manslaughter on circumstantial evidence alone, unless the body has been found; and in a comparatively recent case—*Regina v. Hopkins*——"

"Yes, I know that is the law, Mr. Tressamer," said the judge, interrupting him; "but how do you say the body has not been found? The prosecution have identified the hand."

"I submit that is not sufficient, my lord."

"The coroner's inquest was held upon it," called out the counsel for the prosecution, who was decidedly taken by surprise at this unusual objection. Tressamer treated the interruption with contempt.

"The coroner is hardly an authority to quote to this court. Your lordship sees my point is this. Of course the finding of the hand is some evidence of some crime. But it is nowise decisive. The deceased, or, rather, the person said to be deceased, might have cut off her own hand. We have no *conclusive* evidence that she is really dead."

"But what do you want? Do you mean that in every case the entire body should be found?"

"Oh, no, my lord. If some vital part were discovered, and sufficiently identified, I should say that was enough to go upon. But what Lord Hale means, I take it, is this: that where you are going upon circumstantial evidence—as in this case—where no one saw the crime committed at all, then you must have conclusive evidence from some other source, namely, the dead body."

"But that is not conclusive. That might be the result of suicide."

"Still, it affords a very strong presumption. In any case, there is the rule, laid down by Lord Hale, and acted upon ever since."

"I know, Mr. Tressamer; I am not disputing the law. The only question in my mind is whether this case is not taken out of it by the production of what is part of the body. Of course, I will leave it to the jury to say whether they are satisfied that this is the deceased's hand, if that is any use to you."

"No, my lord, I don't know that I can hope to contest that. But this is a case of life and death, and I certainly would strongly urge your lordship to consider my point."

The judge got up.

"I will just go and ask my brother Wiseman what he thinks," he said. "Personally, I am afraid I cannot go with you."

He went out, and Tressamer sat down in a state of intense agitation. He dare not look round at the dock; but others did, and saw, to their surprise, that the prisoner seemed indifferent to what had just passed.

Eleanor did not want to get off on a law point. Without

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a real, full acquittal her life, as she had told Tressamer, would be too wretched to be worth preserving. And even an acquittal would not be enough while the mystery of her friend's death was left unexplained. Only the full clearing up of the whole story, only the exposure of the real criminal, could bring peace back into her life.

She showed no disappointment, therefore, when the judge returned, with a grave face, and took his seat, saying:

"The trial must proceed. My brother Wiseman inclines to your view, but I am dead against it. I will, of course, reserve the point for the Court for Crown Cases, if you desire."

"If your lordship pleases," said Tressamer.

This was exactly what he had wanted. He now had the chance of getting an acquittal from the jury before him, and, if that failed, of succeeding on the point reserved in the court above.

He rose and said:

"I have one witness to call as to the state of the prisoner's health. I shall, therefore, say nothing now, but call my witness, and address the jury after. Alfred Benjamin James."

A respectably-dressed man stepped into the witness-box.

"You are a chemist, carrying on business at Porthstone. And you have known the prisoner some time?"

"All her life, sir."

"Now, have you advised her recently as to the state of her health?"

"I have."

"Will you just tell us briefly what she has spoken to you about?"

"For some time before the day of the murder she had been unwell. She came to me and asked me to give her something to make her sleep at night. I persuaded her to do without anything, and to take a walk before going to bed instead."

"Yes, and what else?"

"The last night but one before the murder she came to me complaining of nervous headache. I gave her something for it and advised her to go for long walks, two or three miles or more, so as to tire herself out before going to bed. She said she had mislaid her latchkey lately, but would ask Miss Lewis to let her have another, as she thought Miss Lewis had a spare one."

"She came to me complaining of a nervous headache."

This statement caused the jury to prick up their ears. Even they had realised by this time that something in the case turned upon a latchkey.

No further questions were put to the witness by Tressamer, and Pollard saw no opening for cross-examination. The former, therefore, at once began his speech.

"May it please your lordship: Gentlemen of the jury——"

The counsel paused a moment, shook his robe out of the way, clenched his fists upon the table in front of him, and bent forward towards the jury with stern and solemn brow.

"I shall not weary you with the platitudes usual on occasions like this. I shall say nothing to you about banishing from your minds all you may have heard or read in the newspapers about this case, for I am sure it is unnecessary.

"Nor shall I say anything about the weight of responsibility which rests upon my shoulders, because, after all, what is my responsibility to yours? If I make any mistake, if I fail after doing my best, I shall have the consolation of knowing that I am in no way to blame, I have not to answer for the result.

"But you have! In your hands are life and death! The hangman is your instrument; the judge upon the bench is but your assistant. Seek not to shirk your liability; do not trust to others to shield you. On the way in which you discharge your duty to-day depends the most solemn and awful of all considerations—a human life. If you by any prejudice, by any weakness, by any deference to superstition or authority, give an innocent fellow-creature to the tomb, it had been better for you that you had never been born!"

The twelve men in the box shifted themselves uneasily under this indignant apostrophe. They had expected to be cajoled. They found themselves threatened. The rest of those present looked on amazed, and held their breath to listen. The speaker seemed perfectly indifferent to the impression he was creating around him. He glanced at neither the judge nor the prisoner, but fixed his searching eye upon the dozen men he was addressing.

"You know your duty as well as I do. You know you must not give a verdict upon suspicion, no, not though that

suspicion were as dark as Erebus, as heavy as lead. You must have proof. You must have certainty. You must know how this crime was done, and why and wherefore, or you must acquit the prisoner."

It is only under great provocation that a judge will interrupt the counsel for the defence in a case of life and death, but Sir Daniel Buller frowned and fidgeted as he listened to this extreme view of a jury's duties. However, he reflected that he would have the last word. He could afford to wait until the summing up. Meanwhile he took up his pen and made a note.

"Now, gentlemen, let me say this to you, and let me enforce it with all the earnestness I can command—the fact that a murder has been committed is no evidence whatever against the prisoner at the bar.

"No one denies that the crime has been committed. To do so were absurd. Elderly ladies do not disappear mysteriously in the night like this unless somebody has an interest in making them disappear. The whole question for you is this: Had the prisoner any such interest?

"Something has been said in this case about jewels. A question—a shamefully leading and improper question—was put by the counsel for the prosecution—the junior counsel, who seems to have brought to his work a bitterness and an amount of prejudice against the unhappy prisoner which is fortunately rarely met with in a case of this kind; a demeanour which presents a contrast, indeed, to the moderate and judicious tone adopted by my learned friend, Mr. Prescott, whom I was sorry to see summoned elsewhere—a question, as I was saying, was put to the prosecutor, Lewis, who was only too ready to take a sinister hint, with a view of making him swear that the prisoner knew something about those jewels, about which so much prejudice has been imported into this case. Gentlemen, you know nothing about jewels. No evidence has been put before you to-day as to anything of the sort. So far as you or I can tell, the prisoner was never aware of the existence of such things. We are bound to assume—you are bound by your oaths to assume—that there was no such motive to operate upon the prisoner's mind. What motive was there then?

"Gentlemen, from the beginning to the end of this case not one motive has been suggested, not one syllable has been uttered from first to last, to account for the theory which you are asked to accept, that a young, beautiful, well-cared-for, and well-brought-up girl has suddenly, without the smallest provocation, developed the instincts of a cannibal, and committed a shocking and ferocious murder under circumstances which would revolt the most bloodthirsty of savages."

Every word was emphasised by look and gesture. Every word went home to those who heard it. The crowded Bar stared in astonishment. They had not believed their colleague to possess such force. But he went on with hardly a pause.

"You have been told that this is a prosecution on behalf of the Crown. I deny it. Technically it is so, of course. But who is the real prosecutor? Who has been the moving spirit all along—if not the prosecutor, then the persecutor? Who has lost, or professes to have lost, his wretched jewels? Who, the moment he heard that the crime was discovered, turned round and hurled his brutal accusation at this helpless girl? Who rushed off to lodge his information, so as to be beforehand in case any information were to be lodged against him? Who instructed the solicitors at the inquest? Who gave evidence there and at the police court? Who has been hand in glove with the prosecuting solicitors all along? Who is sitting by their side at this moment, without a particle of decent shame?"

This furious burst of invective seemed to fairly overwhelm the subject of it. He made a movement to go away, but the solicitor restrained him by a whisper in his ear.

"Gentlemen, I am here to defend the prisoner. I am not here to attack anyone else. I do not wish to do so. Would to God that I could shut my eyes to the fact that a terrible murder has been done! But I cannot, and you cannot. Someone did that deed. Someone who had a motive for his act treacherously murdered, and brutally mangled that old, feeble, defenceless woman. I ask you to say it was not the prisoner. I ask no more.

"In the old days it would have been different. It was once the law that when a prisoner was accused of murder by a coroner's inquest, then the jury in this court were not entitled to bring in a verdict of acquittal unless they at the same time, and by the same verdict, indicated the person who was really guilty. If that were still the law—and I am glad it is not—but if it were, I should not hesitate for one moment in pointing out to you at least one person who is more likely to have been guilty of this crime than Eleanor Owen.

"I should ask you, in the famous Ciceronian phrase, *Cui bono?* For whose profit was this murder? You have been told by a spiteful servant-girl, whom you may believe for aught I care, that Miss Lewis once promised to remember the prisoner in her will. But did she? In the will which has been proved—and if there was any other will it has been destroyed by the same criminal hands that dyed themselves in blood—in a will dated two years ago, there is not one stiver, not one half-farthing, left to Eleanor Owen; but the whole of the testatrix's property, amounting, I believe, to between twenty and forty thousand pounds, is given unconditionally to her beloved nephew, John Lewis!"

What a depth of sarcasm on the word "beloved" as the barrister brought it out! The object of this terrible attack fairly writhed in his seat.

"Mind," resumed the speaker, "I am not responsible for the suggestion that this crime was committed for the sake of profiting under this poor woman's will. That suggestion came from the other side, prompted, I dare say, by the man Lewis himself. What applies to the prisoner applies to him. As far as motive is concerned—and I am now dealing solely with the question of motive—everything is against the prosecutor, and everything is in favour of his victim.

"And now to examine more closely the evidence, such as it is, of the way in which this crime was brought about. It must have been done after ten that night. So far I agree with the prosecution. Now, where is the evidence as to the prisoner's doings that night?

"We know—we have it from the witnesses for the Crown, and from the respectable chemist, James—that she had been unwell, and had been in the habit of taking midnight walks for some time previously. She took one on this particular night. I do not deny it; I admit it. I demand of you to believe it. She went out at twelve, or rather before, let us say, just as the spiteful servant-girl told you. She went out, leaving the door latched, but not bolted, and she walked in an easterly direction along the shore, where the fisherman met her.

"And I want you to note here for a moment how the evidence for the prosecution has been coloured even in small things. As you have heard, the body, or rather the hand, was found next day at the entrance of Newton Bay. Now, as most of you know, Newton Bay lies to the east of Porthstone, some two miles further along the coast. When the fisherman, Evan Thomas, met the prisoner, she was nowhere near Newton Bay, and she had not the smallest intention, so far as we know, of going there. She was simply strolling up and down the Porthstone Esplanade, and her face happened to be turned towards the east when she was met by him. Yet, how is his evidence put before you? 'I met her. She was going in the direction of Newton Bay.' Gentlemen, I say that is a poisoned answer. It is a poisonous suggestion to your minds that the

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prisoner was actually going to Newton Bay—was making for it at the time. Why didn't they say that she was going towards the tennis-ground, or the Grand Hotel, or the bathing-place. All these lay in the same direction, and there is not a tittle of evidence to show, there is not the smallest reason to suppose, that she ever went a yard beyond those places.

"That is how the prosecution has been conducted throughout. That wicked servant, who practically admitted that she nursed a dislike to her young mistress, got into that box, I put it to you, for the deliberate purpose of making the case against her as black as she could. In reality her evidence was strongly in the prisoner's favour, as I shall point out to you. But she, too, was instructed, or was taught by her own evil nature, to so distort the facts as to make them bear an appearance against the unhappy girl who is on trial for her life.

"First, we have the incident of the groan. On that subject I ask you to accept her first story, that it was a mere troubled exclamation in sleep, if it was really heard at all, which I may be permitted to doubt. For when a witness exhibits such recklessness and malice and wilful perversion of the truth in a case of this solemn character, I cannot willingly believe that any jury of Englishmen will consent to take away a human life on such testimony.

"Then we come to the incident of the prisoner's going out. Good heavens! what colouring is put into a simple incident like that! The prisoner, as we now know, and as this wretched woman doubtless knew perfectly well, often went out at night. She suffered from some nervous attack, accompanied by insomnia, and the chemist, Mr. James, whom the counsel on the other side, with all his bitterness, dared not cross-examine—Mr. James told you that he had himself advised her to take these walks at night. Do you believe him? Do you think a respectable tradesman—I may almost call him a professional man—would come into the box and perjure himself on such a subject? Hardly. It would be too much to expect. I do not think that even my learned friend will ask you to say that Mr. James has committed perjury, though I have no doubt at all that Lewis would like to have it suggested."

There was an intense bitterness in the way in which he brought out Lewis's name. Unconsciously the jury began to be influenced by it, and to look at Lewis each time he was referred to with undisguised aversion.

"Yet how this simple incident is magnified and invested with importance and mystery by the other side—by Lewis and his friends! They tell you how the servant awoke at midnight—you know it is an absurd trifle, but the word "midnight" sounds so much more solemn and dreadful than the words "twelve o'clock p m."—how she woke at midnight and heard a door open—as if people didn't always open doors when they wanted to go out! How she got up quietly—perhaps you may be inclined to say treacherously—and stole downstairs. How she recognised the footsteps as those of Miss Owen. How she heard the front door go, and finally found it unfastened, except for the latch. And all as if something very dreadful had taken place, instead of the ordinary incident of a young lady going out for an hour to walk off a headache!

"And, after all, what does it come too? Why, it sounds ridiculous, but the whole end and result of all this is to prove the very thing which I am most anxious to have proved on behalf of the prisoner—namely, that she was out of the house when this murder was committed. They have tried to incriminate the prisoner, and they have ended in proving an unimpeachable alibi!"

He stopped to let his words sink into the minds of the jury, and everyone in court took advantage of the break to change their positions and breathe more freely. Whispers were exchanged, and the feeling began to prevail that a good point had been made, and the prisoner might very likely get off.

"With what happened after that the prisonor has nothing to do. Mr. Lewis and his friends do not seem to realise, what I hope you will realise, that the fact of footsteps being heard a few minutes after is the strongest point in the prisoner's favour. Why, if no one else had been heard to enter the house on that night it would have looked bad for her. But that is just what the prosecution, in their blind mismanagement, have proved. They have shown out of the mouth of their own witness that someone did come in; someone who had been waiting outside ready to come in, and who took advantage of Miss Owen's exit to slip in by means of a latchkey which he had found, or stolen, or borrowed from the deceased.

"Now you have the clue. This girl, who stated that ten minutes had elapsed, when it must have been only three, to judge by her notions of time in other matters, this same girl wanted to insinuate that the footsteps she heard the second time were the prisoner's. Gentlemen, I ask you frankly not to believe it. I ask you to discount her evidence by the evident ill-feeling she manifested. I ask you to believe that the last footsteps were those of the murderer, and they were heavier because they were a man's.

"What else is there against the prisoner? I ask, what else? She came down late the next morning, forsooth! That is the reason why you are asked to send her in her youth and beauty to a felon's doom. Incredible! Monstrous! As if we all did not constantly get up late, for some reason or another. As if a person who had been out late the night before would not naturally oversleep herself. Why, if she had committed a crime she would have taken particular care to be down early. She would have tried to throw off suspicion by acting in her ordinary way. I am ashamed of answering such arguments.

"The latchkey incident is dead in her favour."

Here the jury, who had shown signs of weariness after their long sitting, brightened up again. They had made up their minds that this was the real point in the case, and were honestly anxious for light upon it.

"Two things are clear—first, that the person who last came into the house and did up the fastenings was the prisoner; second, that the prisoner had a latchkey, whether her own one found again or one which she borrowed from Miss Lewis. Now, if the prisoner had committed this murder, let us see what she would naturally have done in trying to throw suspicion off herself.

"In the first place, I say she would not have fastened up the front door. To do so was practically saying that the crime was not the work of an outsider. No, she would have left the door wide open, as if the criminal were some common robber who had carried off his booty and run away. In the second place, she would have thrown away her latchkey, so as to make it appear that she had not been outside. These points are so important that, with your permission, I will repeat them again."

Anyone who has had experience of juries knows how difficult it is to get into their minds a process of logical reasoning. To a trained lawyer such a thing is not so hard, but even to him it is far easier to master reasoning from a book than by word of mouth. Oral teaching has its advantages, doubtless, but few things are harder than to convey ideas of any subtlety by means of speech to an audience.

Tressamer patiently set to work, and for twenty minutes he repeated and explained all that he had been saying. When he thought that the jury really understood him he returned to where he had started from, and re-directed their suspicions on Lewis.

"Before I sit down I think I ought to suggest to you how this crime really was done. You have heard the story of the prosecution. Now let me put to you my story on behalf of the prisoner.

"The deceased woman was wealthy. About her jewels we know nothing, and I do not refer to them, but she had other property to a large extent. The whole of this was to go at her death to a nephew. For two years she lived alone in this house, alone night after night with the prisoner, and

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nothing happened. At last the nephew who was to inherit her wealth suddenly returned from the other end of the world. That night she met her death.

"At twelve o'clock her companion, who suffered from sleeplessness, went out for a long walk. Hardly had she closed the door behind her than the murderer stole up to it and made his way in. Probably he had a latchkey. We know that Miss Owen had mislaid hers. It may have been that. We also know that Miss Lewis had a spare one, and that her nephew was to take up his residence in the house on the very next morning. So that, mark this, if the murder had been deferred for one more day he would have fallen under the same suspicion as Miss Owen.

"The murderer entered, as I said, by means of his latch-key. But it was the first time he had used it. He did not know the peculiarity of the latch. He raised it too high, and it stuck.

"Not staying to notice this, in his wickedness, he passed into the house and upstairs. He tried the door of his aunt's —I mean the deceased's—room. It was, of course, locked,

"Then he carried off the body."

as it was found the following morning. He went into the next, Miss Owen's, which he knew to be empty, having seen her leave the house. Through this he passed into the adjoining chamber. Beneath the bed, in all probability, lay a chest of valuables. Charity would fain suggest that his first intention was merely to steal these, and that the blacker crime was, in a sense, forced upon him by the awakening of the sleeper.

"The next step was to remove the body. For what reason it matters not. It is an impulse with all murderers to conceal the traces of their guilt. They dig holes in the earth and bury it, they carry it into the wilderness and hide it, they sink it in the depths of the sea. But the earth will not contain it, the wilderness betrays the ghastly secret, the waves cast up the horror."

His voice rang through the crowded court like that of one possessed, and every man trembled.

"He lowered it through the window, where the traces were found next day. Then, clutching up his booty, and forgetting, it may be, that all would be his ere long, or possibly not feeling sufficiently sure of his heirship, he hurried down, with agitated tread, so that even the half-sleeping girl in the room above could discern a something strange about his walk. "Then he carried off the body, mutilated for some mysterious and terrible reason which may never be revealed—possibly to lighten his mysterious load; but let me spare you these shocking considerations. All this, remember, Lewis asks you to think was done by a young girl not twenty years of age."

The speaker's voice vibrated with the fury which he threw into this denunciation. The jury trembled under his eye as he rolled it fiercely from face to face. As for the object of these fearful invectives, he turned red and white by turns, and would have interrupted over and over again if he had not been almost forcibly restrained by the solicitor for the prosecution. Tressamer went on, after a moment's pause to recover from his exhaustion:

"And Eleanor Owen, what of her? What was she doing meanwhile? Pacing the shore and trying to soothe her throbbing head with the medicine of the sea breezes. At last she returns, tired and abstracted. She puts her key into the latch, the door yields before her. She notices nothing, but comes in, closes and fastens the door behind her, and retires to rest.

"The next morning she awakes. Just as she is dressed the servants rush up; the whole horror bursts upon her. She is stunned. She does not realise what has happened, or how it concerns her. She finds herself seized and dragged away by this devoted nephew and his creatures. And thus, gentlemen, in that state of darkness and bewilderment, has she rested ever since, and must rest till your just verdict sends her forth once more into the light of day, and the verdict of another jury, not less courageous and righteous than yourselves, sends the real author of this hidden tragedy to the doom he has now doubly deserved."

He sat down. But there was no applause in court, as happens so often at the end of a speech on the prisoner's behalf. All present felt that they had listened not so much to a plea for Eleanor Owen as to an accusation against John Lewis. The barrister had put it too plainly for any man to be deceived. It was not a mere question of guilt or innocence. The issue now before the jury was—which of these two is guilty?

(To be continued.)

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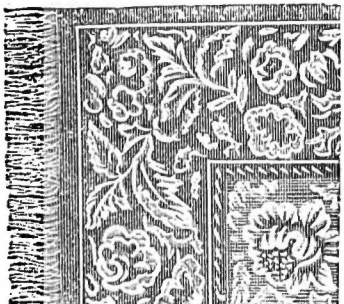

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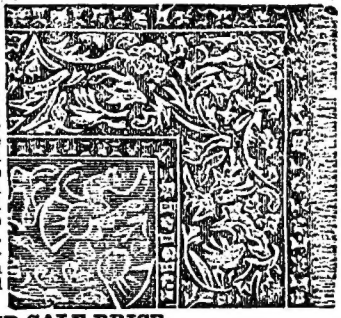

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RESULT OF PRIZE COMPETITIONS ANNOUNCED IN THE CHRISTMAS DOUBLE NUMBER.

A VERY large number of persons entered for these competitions, which were altogether a great success. The scrap-books especially were most prettily arranged, and reflected great credit upon all the boys and girls who entered; it was, in fact, a most delicate task to decide upon the best twelve.

On page 115 will be found a reproduction of one of the best attempts in the Composite Picture and the Elephant Straight Line Competitions. Four competitors correctly named the idea which Farmer Hayseed forgot, and the prize of £10 was forwarded to the sender of the first to hand.

A large number of competitors succeeded in solving the two arithmetical problems, and the prizes have gone to those whose attempts first arrived at this office.

COMPETITION No. 1.

FARMER HAYSEED'S IDEA.

THE £10 winner:
HARRY F. FRASER,
Londesborough Arms,
Seamer, near Scarborough.

* * * * * *

COMPETITION No. 2.

ELEPHANT.

F. Gillott, 32, Regina Road, London, N.
James Smith, 19, Montrose Street, Glasgow.
C. W. Ayers, Kent House, Snodland, Kent.
Charles V. Walker, 12, Bridport Street, St. Ebbes, Oxford.
G. F. Saunders, 31, Clifton Place, Stapleton Road, Bristol.
Charles Cale, Colchester.
Miss D. Mann, 29, Mowbray Street, Heaton, Newcastle-on-Tyne.
Miss E. M. Westhorp, 12, Park Village East, Regent's Park.
G. H. Dodd, 37, Plymouth Street. C.-on-M., Manchester.
John C. Scott, 155, Comely Park Street. Dennistoun, Glasgow.
Miss B. Lindsay, 1, Mackenzie Street, Slough, Bucks.
Miss Ethel Simmonds, Sussex View, Tunbridge Wells.

* * * * * *

COMPETITION No. 3.

COMPOSITE PICTURE.

Lindsay Harman, 75, High Street, Bromley, Kent.
C. Puttock, 13, Elgin Terrace, Maida Vale, W.
John E. Scott, 153, Comely Park Street, Dennistoun, Glasgow.
J. Rawland Atkinson, Finkle Street, Kendal.
William McBeath, 45, W. Preston Street, Edinburgh.
Harry Nobbs, 67, Frobisher Road, Hornsey, N.
Edwin Bottomly, Bryn Berllan, Llandudno Junction, near Conway.
John McGarth, 51, Sultan Street, Belfast.
J. M. Child, 4, Cromwall Street, Mount Pleasant, Swansea.
Fred Solo, Theatre Royal, Bradford, Yorks.
George McIntyre, 40, Nithodale Road, Strathbungo, Glasgow.
G. T. Harwood, 137, Harrington Road, Workington.

* * * * * *

COMPETITION No. 4.

COIN.

John Hamer, 3, St. David's Road, Carnarvon, N. Wales.
F. W. Flower, Sibsey, Boston, Lincolnshire.
G. A. Porter, 4, Oak Avenue, Urmston, near Manchester.
A. Keniston, Hinton St. Mary, Blandford, Dorset.
H. W. Spice, 21, Lavender Street, Brighton.
L. C. Knighton, 167, Choumert Road, Peckham.
J. H. Osborne, 19, Sunnyside Road, Ealing.
S. L. Hayton, Star Inn, Newlyn West, Penzance, Cornwall.
J. Pan, Constitution Hill, Aberystwyth, Wales.
W. Brown, 132, Kent Road, Glasgow.
J. J. Smith, 379, High Street, Cheltenham.
T. H. Fisher, 162, Waller Road, New Cross, S.E.

* * * * * *

COMPETITION No. 5.

Answer—1800 SOLDIERS.

Mrs. F. Davies, 3, Brunel Terrace, Woodford Bridge, Essex.
Mrs. E. Easton, Flower Lodge, Marble Hill, Cork.
Miss E. Handley, 36, St. John Street, Hanley, Staffs.
Mrs. A. F. Gadsdon, Belle Vue, Westwood Park, Forest Hill.
Emily E. Battle, 116, Alexandra Road, Ford, Devonport.
Miss Warman, The Gardens, Eastnor Castle, Ledbury.
S. A. Pilkington, 22, Lincroft Street, Moss Side, Manchester.
Miss E. Smith, Litfield House, Portishead, near Bristol.
Miss C. E. Wright, 65, Woodgrange Road, Forest Gate, Essex.
Miss Motterhead, 17, Norfolk Street, Hyde, Cheshire.
Miss S. Sides, Union Street, Bridgtown, Staffs.
Miss J. Duncombe, Keymer, Hassocks, Sussex.

COMPETITION No. 6.

SCRAP-BOOK.

Hilda D. Clewlow, Tunley Street, Stone, Staffs.
Kate Williams, 42, Alwyn Street, Aigburth Road, Liverpool.
Ethel Chappell, 19, Murray Place, Stirling, N.B.
Gertrude Page, Victoria Coffee House, Victoria Road, Romford, Essex.
K. L. Davies, 12, Pembridge Crescent, W.
E. Strong, 6, Hunter Street, Carnforth.
W. A. Slade Gosling, 4, Pretoria Avenue, Walthamstow.
A. Webb, 2, Oak Place, Malvern Link.
C. Agnes Cowell, 11, North Street, Fleetwood.
Rhoda Gilbert, 16, Tallow Hill, Worcester.
Hilda F. Gross, 69, Mill Hill Road, Norwich.
Dolly Lewis, 62, Mount Road, Hastings.

* * * * * *

COMPETITION No. 7.

ANAGRAM—"GUILTY GOLD," BY HEADON HILL.

D. Elder, 7, St. Vincent Street, Edinburgh.
Miss R. Napthin, 3, Ditton Walk, Cambridge.
J. A. Walbank, Usworth, Washington, R.S.O., co. Durham.
W. Millard, The Schools, Ascot, Berks.
Mrs. Lywood, Redlynch, Salisbury.
H. Winslow, 8, Firhill Road, Glasgow.
James Galbraith, 1, Park Terrace, Paisley, N.B.
C. A. Elliott, Galley Hill, Greenhithe, Kent.
Mrs. Stanley, 30, Garturk Street, Govanhill, Glasgow.
George W. Blake, 4, St. Martin's Terrace, Salisbury.
F. J. Etherington, 74, Hythe Road, Swindon.
Mrs. Joseph Holmes, Westbury Street, Brood Lane, Laisleredyke, Bradford, Yorks.

* * * * * *

COMPETITION No. 8.

ANAGRAM—"VALDAR THE OFT-BORN," BY GEORGE GRIFFITH.

Alex. Reoch, 14, Forest Park Road, Dundee.
W. Gyde, army schoolmaster, Warley, Essex.
Mrs. J. Read, Forest Lodge, Alnwick, Northumberland.
Horace H. Dunmore, 22, Albion Place, Northampton.
Miss Jeannie Graham, 32, Epworth Street, Belfast.
C. A. Elliott, Galley Hill, Greenhithe, Kent.
Mrs. A. Beck, 4, Victoria Villas, Herne Street, near Canterbury, Kent.
W. P. Armstrong, 12, Arboretum Avenue, Lincoln.
J. Green, 183, Chapel Street, Leigh, Lancashire.
Harry Page, Gordon Place, The Hundred, Romsey, Hants.
F. Goodwin, 1, Rutland Gate, Claremont Park, Blackpool.
John W. Box, 7, Brook Street, Lancaster.

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Harold E. Fairdide, 2, Prospect Place, High Road, Upper Clapton.
A. Pelkington, 22, Lincroft Street, Moss Side, Manchester.
D. C. Woods, 14, Guerusey Road, Magdalen Road, Norwich.
G. T. Watson, 31, Salisbury Terrace, Darlington.
C. P. Cox, 63, Stonefield Road, Hastings, Sussex.
Mrs. A. F. Gadsdon, Belle Vue, Westwood Park, Forest Hill.
Miss A. Kidd, 416, Woolwich Road, New Charlton, Kent, S.E.
F. F. Feltham, 73, Hawthorn Street, Totterdown, Bristol.
Mr. E. Simm, New Chapel House, Balderstone, near Blackburn.
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THE END OF

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